




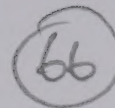
3 1761 11630687 9



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2023 with funding from
University of Toronto

<https://archive.org/details/31761116306879>

CA20N
X1
-023



Government
Publications



No. 19

N° 19

ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Second Session, 39th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

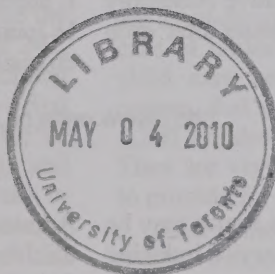
Deuxième session, 39^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 21 April 2010

Mercredi 21 avril 2010



Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Greffière
Deborah Deller

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

<http://www.ontla.on.ca/>

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7410 or 325-3708.

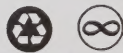
Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7410 ou le 325-3708.

Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services
Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



Service du Journal des débats et d'interprétation
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400; télécopieur, 416-325-7430
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 21 April 2010

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 21 avril 2010

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the non-denominational prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

FULL DAY EARLY LEARNING STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE L'APPRENTISSAGE DES JEUNES ENFANTS À TEMPS PLEIN

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 20, 2010, on the motion for third reading of Bill 242, An Act to amend the Education Act and certain other Acts in relation to early childhood educators, junior kindergarten and kindergarten, extended day programs and certain other matters / *Projet de loi 242, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation et d'autres lois en ce qui concerne les éducateurs de la petite enfance, la maternelle et le jardin d'enfants, les programmes de jour prolongé et d'autres questions.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I am pleased to continue the debate we embarked upon yesterday concerning Bill 242, the Full Day Early Learning Statute Law Amendment Act, 2010. This bill, of course, was introduced—first reading took place—on February 17 this year, and we've had our social policy standing committee meetings and had input from stakeholders. But again, I do want to make the point that there were three days of hearings; however, it was not enough to accommodate all the people and groups throughout the province who obviously had concerns with the bill and wanted to make recommendations in order to strengthen the bill on behalf of families and children in the province of Ontario.

I also want to reiterate the fact that, despite the many organizations and individuals who did appear before us, the amendments that were introduced were not ones that were put forward by either of the two opposition parties. We tried to introduce amendments that reflected the input of those who did appear. Regrettably, none of our amendments were accepted, and the only changes that were made were changes that were made by the government. At the end of the day, much of the input that was received wasn't taken into consideration, and, as a result,

the bill is probably not the best it can be on behalf of children and families in the province of Ontario.

As you know, this bill amends the Education Act. It's going to provide for the operation of junior kindergarten and kindergarten on a full-day basis. It's also going to provide for the operation by boards of education of extended day programs for four- and five-year-olds outside the hours of junior kindergarten and kindergarten. This was probably the most contentious issue, because unfortunately, once the transition period is finished, it's going to eliminate the provision of those services by private, not-for-profit child care providers, one of whom has been doing this in Ontario for 150 years; so there is a great deal of concern about the livelihood of those providers—those small businesses—and the fact that they will no longer be in a position to provide services for four- and five-year-olds in the province of Ontario.

Of course, the third part of the bill allows for the appointment of early childhood educators to positions in junior kindergarten, kindergarten and extended day programs. That is certainly new.

Anyway, I've expressed my concerns about Bill 242. Many people who came said that the bill was a good idea. They did support it, and they liked the direction it was heading. This information came from the private, not-for-profit providers as well. In fact, I have a quote from the London Bridge Child Care Services Inc. They are a not-for-profit organization currently dedicated to the care of children aged zero to five years. They have 14 child care centres in London, Sarnia and Exeter—of course, that's my hometown—they currently serve over 1,200 children and they have a staff of 286 educators. They are very proud of the services they have been able to provide for infants, toddlers and children.

Their response is that they support the Ontario government's vision for full-day early learning for four- and five-year-olds, as recommended in the Pascal report entitled *With Our Best Future in Mind*. However, they are concerned about the fact that they will no longer be in a position to provide services to four- and five-year-olds, and of course there's a concern that the child care systems in the province that currently have been providing care for children zero to four in particular could break down with the elimination of their eligibility to continue to provide care for those four- and five-year-olds. Again, this is a concern.

They also point out that Pascal did recommend that community partnerships and collaboration were important. It appears that this government has chosen to ignore those components of the Pascal report, just as the govern-

ment chose to ignore the part that talked about parental choice. My colleague Lisa MacLeod has pointed out that she received a message from the board in Ottawa indicating that if full-day kindergarten is offered at her daughter's school and they don't want it, they need to move to another school.

I think there is a lot of concern about the fact that there was a little bit of cherry-picking when it came to what the government decided to do as far as the Pascal report was concerned. The one component they have conveniently decided to abandon is the approach he recommended concerning community partnerships and collaboration. That, of course, is going to have an impact on the entire child care sector, and I am concerned that many of our children will not have providers, because some of these people did depend upon the fees that were paid by the four- and five-year-olds to subsidize the infants and toddlers. It's much more expensive, of course, to provide for care at a younger age, because your ratio of provider to child is smaller and you have to accommodate infants and toddlers; their needs are quite different than those of the four- and five-year-olds. There are people who have expressed concern about what the government is doing.

0910

The other issue that has arisen is the whole issue of fees. The government has stated repeatedly that the issue surrounding the fees charged by boards—and this is for the care that's offered to the four- and five-year-olds outside of the school day—is an issue that is yet to be determined, so we have no idea what the cost is going to be. The government says it is going to be determined by regulation. That is a big part of the problem with this legislation: It was introduced in haste. We know that education basically comes to a halt at the end of June, so we have about two more months to go and, really, the implementation plan is non-existent. There's very little information available about what type of curriculum; how all of this will roll out; who's going to be providing the extended daycare; who's going to be providing the daycare for the four- and five-year-olds; and how long the private, not-for-profit people will be allowed to continue to offer these programs in the schools until such time as the boards of education assume responsibility for the four- and five-year-olds' daycare outside of the school day.

That means that if the boards are now going to have to offer this daycare outside of the school day, there are going to be fees. The government says they aren't going to introduce a standard province-wide fee for service. They've indicated instead that they're going to leave these fees to the discretion of each individual school board. Of course, all this information that I'm putting on the public record isn't information that I've decided is of concern; I'm standing here today trying to reflect the input of all of those who made a verbal presentation to the committee or gave us a written submission. Somebody indicated that this could result in a race "to the bottom."

School boards, people have said to us, may end up competing with the not-for-profits as well as the other boards. Remember, we have four boards in the province

of Ontario: We have our English public, English Catholic, French public and French Catholic. They're afraid there may be competition between the boards; there may be competition between the boards and the not-for-profits, and if there's a race to the bottom, it could end up with rates that are unaffordable in order to operate this program. So there are some concerns about the fees. The issue hasn't been addressed, and here we have a program that's supposed to be up and running by September.

The other big issue—you know what? I've referred to it before. We have a government that has the highest deficit in the history of the province of Ontario—it's over \$21 billion—and no plan to balance the budget. They've indicated that it will probably happen over eight years, but without a plan, we don't know if that, indeed, is even possible, because they're not going to reduce their spending this year. In fact, they're introducing a very expensive new program. There are concerns that this is going to impact on other educational programs—in particular, special education. Having been a teacher myself, a school board chair and Minister of Education, I know full well that there are many, many children who have special education needs whose needs have not yet been addressed. Unfortunately, this can, again, take money away from those areas.

We also have a lot of students who need a lot of support—English as a second language. They move here from other countries. I understand that too, because I started kindergarten midway through the year when I came here from Holland. I can remember that my language skills obviously weren't adequate. I was fortunate to have some outstanding teachers—as I did throughout my entire education in the elementary and secondary school system—who supported me. I can remember, if I look back at my kindergarten and grade 1 marks, gradually the marks that weren't quite so good did become good once I had proficiency in the English language. So there are many needs in our educational system that need to be addressed. Hopefully, this won't take dollars away. We've heard that expression of concern as well.

We have a program that's going to cost at least \$1.5 billion when it's fully operational. However, we know that the majority of schools don't have the physical capacity to accommodate the students. As a result, there's going to be a lot of money that needs to be made available for either renovations to facilities to make them appropriate for the four- and five-year-olds in junior full-day kindergarten, or we're going to have to add additions to schools. The Institute of Marriage and Family Canada has estimated that the cost of the program will be beyond the \$1.5 billion—which I suspect it will, too. They're saying it will cost at least \$1.8 billion annually.

Cost was a concern that was pointed out by many of the presenters, and of course if I go back to the fact that the schools in years one and two are going to be chosen based on the fact that they probably have the physical capacity for the program, then once you get into years three, four and five, those schools will obviously need considerable renovations and additions. So far, the

government has only announced \$250 million, but I do anticipate, and certainly people who made presentations indicated, that those costs are going to be much higher. It will be over \$1 billion there, of course, as well.

One of the other things that we did hear from trustees and certainly from those who made representations was a lack of an implementation plan, and concern about that. Of course, Irene Atkinson, a long-serving trustee in the Toronto District School Board, said that she and other trustees thought this was "one of the most ill-conceived and badly thought-through programs the province has ever announced."

Interjection.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I don't think she is a Conservative.

Interjections.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: She might be, but I can assure you—I would say to you that Irene, who I know vaguely, is a person who has always expressed an interest—obviously, if you're a trustee for that long, your primary interest is students in the classroom, and that is the comment that she made.

I can also quote from a Durham District School Board trustee, Michael Barrett. I don't know Michael. He says, "The funding is not adequate to roll out the program as prescribed by the province." In fact, there were trustees in the GTA who were quite concerned about the program and the lack of detail coming from the province. They got together, I believe, on April 12—it's quoted in the Toronto Star: There was a meeting of trustees on Saturday from "Toronto, York region, Durham region and several other smaller boards." He goes on to say, "There will be some very difficult choices to make. We will have to take out dollars from other" programs. I think that's what I have just talked about.

Then we have trustee Howard Goodman, vice-president of the Ontario Public School Boards' Association, who says, "With an issue this complex, with all the nuances of the relationship between daycares and schools, it's not humanly possible to get it right on the first cut, so we hope the legislation will be flexible." He goes on to urge the province to put the nitty-gritty details of implementation into regulations that can be tweaked on short notice if needed.

Again, we have Catherine Fife, vice-president of the Ontario Public School Boards' Association, saying some school boards are "really struggling with the transition to the full-day model," and the need to focus on that. Of course she raises the fact that school boards have never charged fees before—they don't have a structure in place—and points out that many boards have groups like the Y and the Boys and Girls Clubs running child care centres in their schools, so there is an established relationship there. I can tell you, Mr. Bradley, that she's not of the party.

0920

I would say that trustees throughout the province of Ontario are raising concerns. I was a chair and a trustee, and do you know what? They have a responsibility to do

that. It doesn't mean that they disagree with the program, but it's a major educational initiative—probably the most major reform I've seen for many, many years—and we need to get it right the first time. There is a lot of anxiety out there on the part of trustees, administrators, teachers, parents and, obviously, organizations whose livelihood could well disappear. That's important, and I need to get this on the record, because all these people have spent time making representations and we need to know that there are concerns out there.

I want to quote an editorial in my paper, the Kitchener-Waterloo Record, on April 3. It's John Haddock, chief executive officer of the YMCA of Kitchener, Waterloo and Cambridge. Everybody knows that the YMCA has delivered high-quality programs for children up to age 12 in our schools in the province of Ontario. He says: "Now imagine Ontario's 72 school boards spending time and money to establish and administer extended day programs. It would be duplication on a massive scale, needlessly using precious resources and resulting in increased costs for school boards, and ultimately, taxpayers. The fees that parents pay now for this care—to the YMCA or other providers—will almost certainly rise."

I want to quote Jamie Gunn, superintendent of business, Grand Erie District School Board. This appeared in the Brantford Expositor on March 12: "The Grand Erie District School Board could be looking at a \$500,000 shortfall in funding for the first year of full-day kindergarten.

"And, according to cost estimates released this week, the board would be forced to charge parents significantly more than current daycare providers for before- and after-school care to make the program break even."

He also says, "The program leaves us with some concerns, and we're not alone."

This is important. Then, a trustee on the Grand Erie board goes on to say: "We don't know where we are going to get half a million dollars.... We are going to have to take money out of other programming to fund this. I don't think that's good for kids or good for the system."

There are other quotes like that, and I raise them because, despite the fact that people are not necessarily opposed to this initiative, certainly there are some legitimate concerns about the implementation process, the haste with which the program is being rolled out.

I think that one of the greatest concerns is probably going to focus on the four- and five-year-olds for whom, I guess if you have the program in your school, the daycare outside of the school day will need to be provided by the school. But what happens to all those other children who don't have full-day care available? And what happens once full-day care is made available? What's going to happen during the summer and on holidays? There are a lot of questions that are left. I would say that the responses we got in clause-by-clause were not very reassuring as to giving some certainty to parents and providers about what is going to happen.

Fees and partnerships are other issues. I think that parents are left wondering about funding, about fees, about

access. Obviously, boards are left wondering how they're going to be able to pay for this program and how they're going to make sure that they roll it out in a way that really is responsive to the needs of the children in their community.

I would say to the government that, despite the fact that many people support the initiative, if you had given it an additional year before you rolled it out, people would probably have been a little bit happier. Maybe you should have tried to pilot the program. We used to do this quite often, I think, in the province of Ontario, if there were initiatives, in order to get it right, in order to identify some of the consequences, some of them quite unintended. If you have some pilot programs in boards throughout the province of Ontario, in different geographical locations, you can also identify some of the problems.

Cost is a big issue, but personally, having been in a leadership position in education, my personal biggest concern is that the program has been rolled out in haste. There hasn't been a plan of implementation, and there are far too many questions that remain to be answered. Certainly we heard the government say in clause-by-clause, "That's going to be in regulation." Well, I would just point out to you again that the educational system shuts down after the end of June. We have two months to get the facts out to school boards and to parents in order that parents will have some certainty when September rolls around.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I want to congratulate the member for Kitchener–Waterloo for a number of things. She does raise many good questions that I will speak to in about eight minutes, questions that many parents have raised, and others in the child care field, that have not been adequately addressed by this government in spite of the assurances that they will. I have no security that they indeed will do that.

I congratulate her for listening to some of the deputations because she introduced some amendments that connected very clearly to what the deputants had to say, unlike the government that pretended they did, that says they did. They claim they made amendments after listening to the deputations, and have done absolutely nothing. But to her credit, she did introduce a couple of amendments that reflected what people were saying.

I was alarmed because I took the liberty of reviewing the comments of the minister and the parliamentary assistant. The parliamentary assistant said, "We listened" to what people had to say. It was "valuable input." "Their feedback led our government to propose several amendments to Bill 242 to the standing committee which considered the legislation before referring it to today's third reading." She says as well, "The bill before us today is a stronger piece of legislation thanks to their input, and I'm pleased, of course, to be standing here today to speak in favour of Bill 242."

Thanks to their input? I and the member for Kitchener–Waterloo were the only ones who introduced amendments

because of the input. They introduced absolutely nothing, and the amendments they introduced were utterly inconsequential.

To the member, thank you for some of the amendments you introduced and for listening to the deputations.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rick Johnson: I'd like to thank the members from Kitchener–Waterloo and from Trinity–Spadina for their comments, especially the member from Kitchener–Waterloo. I had the pleasure of working with her when she was the education minister several years ago.

Investing in early learning is good for the children in this province, it's good for parents and it's good for Ontario. By implementing it next year, up to 35,000 four- and five-year-olds in nearly 1,400 classes in almost 600 schools will benefit from the first phase of full-day learning in September. To delay would mean another year that our children are without full-day learning.

0930

You talked about doing pilot programs and having it available for boards. In 2002, my former school board, Trillium Lakelands, introduced full-day learning in 18 of our schools. We called it the RACE program, Reading and Counting Every Day. We had the same type of discussion and push-back as we were moving to implement this program. What happened after a year was that the concerns were unfounded. In fact, daycare spaces were opened up within the community, people had more access to it and it was very successful. Unfortunately, at that time, we did not have the funding to continue this program to do it long-term.

Regarding special education, if there's one thing that children in this province will benefit from, it's early identification. This has been talked about in reports for years: that the earlier a child is identified with special needs, the better chance that child has with success. By having the children in these programs, we will be able to have teachers come in and assess children earlier, find out if they have special needs and address those special needs. Ultimately, that will be great for the children.

As for timing, we're in a severe period of declining enrolment in the province. Many school boards in this province currently have the room to implement this.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: I want to commend the member from Kitchener–Waterloo, who explained in her remarks her contribution to education from parent to teacher to board chair and, I think, educator of the year at one time, as well as Minister of Education. I think we should all listen and learn.

She raises a number of very important points, that there really are more questions than answers. In fact, she points out very importantly that the legislation does not follow the recommendations of Dr. Pascal. The early implementation is being questioned across the board, certainly in my area of Durham, as she did mention.

I can only say that the issue that I see is, basically, the school year, and the question of: What do parents do on

those times in late June, July and August? What do they do on professional development days? What do they do during Christmas break and March break?

So it is inconsistent, but it actually dismantles the current regulated daycare system that does exist because the articles I've read is that this is one of the problems, where they've acquiesced to the powerful teachers' unions and, primarily, without causing a conflict here, they didn't even recognize the legitimacy of the early childhood educators who actually do the job today, who are regulated professionals, who are trained, competent and capable. There is a growing conflict, there's no question there, about who's in charge.

If you look at the article that I'm going to refer to, it says here, "Grand Erie trustee Don Werden called the plan to have school boards provide before- and after-care a 'disaster waiting to happen.'"

"Jim Wibberley, Grand Erie's education director, has complained that 'we are not only going to be a board of education, but a board of child care.'"

"Child care centre operators say the children in their programs"—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. The member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently to the member from Kitchener–Waterloo, as I always do. She speaks with some considerable knowledge. She always speaks in a very balanced tone, is not accusatory and is simply making very good sense.

She talks about the program for all-day learning, which New Democrats support. She talked about some of the concerns that have been raised by educators, by school trustees and by parents, and largely they're financial. She is right to key in upon the financial aspect, because it's one thing to pass laws in this Legislature and it's quite another, when it comes to budget time, to properly fund them.

We have seen this over and over again with well-meaning legislation that has been passed in this place that goes for naught. I think the finest example of that, although she didn't speak to it, is clearly when we talked about helping disabled adults and the Passport funding and the Passport dollars, and the whole program that was supposed to make families and adults independent. When we talked in the Legislature, it seemed like a good thing to do, but I remember standing, as she has today, in the Legislature and saying, "This program will not work unless it is properly funded."

She is raising the same concern here around all-day learning. Will it work? Yes, it will, but only if it is properly funded and only if the program is set out to meet the expectations of the schools, the trustees, the parents and the children. They have to be the priority. I'm simply saying to the government, listen to what she has to say and make sure that in this budget and in the budget that follows, as this program rolls out, the money is there to do it properly, because unless you do, the program will fail.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Kitchener–Waterloo, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I do appreciate the comments that have been made by the member from Trinity–Spadina, the member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, my colleague from Durham and the member from Beaches–East York.

Do you know what? I personally agree, and I've always been a firm believer that if we can identify problems early and if we can give our children the best start in life, it's important. In fact, that's one of the reasons, when I was Minister of Health, we introduced the Healthy Babies, Healthy Children program—that was the Harris government—that government today does an evaluation of all children at birth to identify whether or not those children are at risk. It may be physical, mental, psychological, whatever it might be. Then, of course, we try to support those children and those families, because you've got to work with the families if you're going to make a difference in the lives of children.

We also set up a preschool speech and language program to identify early those children who might have challenges. I'm a big supporter of the KidsAbility type of programs as well. That is so, so important. But for all of these programs, you need to make sure that they are properly funded. You need to listen to the concerns of the people in the province of Ontario, particularly the families and those with knowledge of the issue.

I just want to go back to what my colleague Mr. Marchese said. I think, at the end of the day, it was disappointing to have so many deponents appear before us, either in person or through written submissions, and then to see the government not accept their recommendations.

We have a bill, and we hope that we'll see more details soon.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I have to tell you that it's a real pleasure to speak to Bill 242.

I want to say that we had many deputations—two Mondays, one Tuesday; from 2 to 6 on the Monday, 2 to 6 on the other Monday and 4 to 6 on the Tuesday. We were able to fit in a lot of people because we knew it was going to be a big concern. Originally, the government thought two days might accommodate it, and we said that we should leave it open because we think there are going to be more people who want to speak to it. There were, and that's why we had a third day.

We listened to a whole lot of people who came to us from the non-profit-sector child care, some private sector as well—not many, but some. We had a lot of YMCAs and a whole lot of folks who provide early childhood education who had a lot of concerns about what the bill would do or wouldn't do.

I want to begin by saying that I think Petr Varmuza framed it in a way that I believe was rather poetic. He said three things: Is it the right thing to do? Are we doing it right? Are we giving the right resources to this pro-

gram? I thought those three Rs were just perfect for the debate, and I want to speak to those three Rs.

Is it the right thing to do? New Democrats say yes, it is. We are going to always have cycles in our economy where we're going to have ups and downs. We can't use every downward cycle as an excuse to deprive our children of the programs they need.

Is there unanimity around this program? No, there is no—

Hon. James J. Bradley: The sky's the limit to the NDP.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Sorry?

Hon. James J. Bradley: Darrell Dexter understands the limitations of public office.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I thought we were on the same team on the right thing to do.

0940

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I don't want to feel left out here.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Through you, Speaker, let me go over the right thing to do, and then we can talk about where we find ourselves with some problems.

There is no unanimity with respect to this program. In fact, I did a Goldhawk program and we had call-ins. There were a number of people who just opposed the idea of having full-time JK and full-time kindergarten. They believe—

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Everybody said New Democrats support it, right? Listen to me. You've got to listen.

Mr. Michael Prue: Listen to him.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Yes. Put down the papers and the other reading and listen to the debate.

There are a number of parents who actually believe—men and women who have children—they should be responsible for the care of their children, and they believe in that strongly. I don't want to deprive them of the right, or indeed the privilege to do that, if that is what they choose. But I know there are men and women in this society who would love to take care of their children. I know many men who would love to stay at home and watch their children, and many women who would love to do that as well. What we know is that many of them cannot afford to do that; they can't. If you live in downtown Toronto, in my riding, or Beaches—East York, housing is inaccessible to ordinary human beings. There are people who come and spend indeed \$700,000, \$800,000, and yes, spend another \$100,000 to renovate. God bless. I don't know how they do it; God bless. I don't know that they are human or at a different echelon; I think they are up there somewhere. But they're not the norm. They can't afford a home in Toronto. Those who do have the pecunia to do so—God bless. But even outside of Toronto, in the GTA and beyond, housing is becoming inaccessible. They can't afford to stay at home and watch the little children; they can't. So you've got families, large families, working and living in the same home to pay this mortgage that is never going to be paid. It's not like the old days, when my father was able to pay our house, in

1962, in three years, with my older brother. My father and older brother—

Mr. Mike Colle: And the house only cost \$10,000.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: But it was a whole lot of money then, Michael.

Mr. Mike Colle: How much was it?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It was \$14,000, a whole lot of money. My father was very afraid to have bought that house. You say, "How much was it?" but in those times it was a lot. And he was afraid. But they worked hard and they invested all their earnings into that mortgage, and people are doing the same today, except mortgages are so high today, relative to the earnings, that I don't know how they do it.

So you have men and women calling on that program saying, "We can't afford it. We want to watch our own children. It's not right that we institutionalize our children in these programs." I don't agree with them. And I believe that's a minority of people; I really do. But I acknowledge that that's what they feel and that's what they want. But I also want to make the point that there are a whole lot of people who can't afford to do that, and there are a whole lot of people who want their kids to have the socialization of involvement with other children, the interaction with other children. From a social, psychological, intellectual point of view, it is a good thing. This is not to say that those who stay at home and are watched by grandmothers is a bad thing. But they do not get that intellectual stimulation, intelligent play, that they would have in a child care, or indeed this program, that we believe is a good thing to have—good for children, good for families, good for our economy, good for society.

We're currently spending over \$2 billion in special education and not meeting their needs. The member from Kitchener-Waterloo said we should be spending money there. Well, she's right. We could and should be spending adequately on special education, because it's a growing problem. Between mental illness and a whole lot of other physiological problems that we are unfortunately given by birth, we have to be able to be given the resources to help. More and more children are coming into our educational system with problems. We've got to help. And we have to prevent problems from setting in that become unalterable, by way of our ability to change them.

So we say, should we be spending more on special ed? Yes. But it's not either-or. This program, we believe, as New Democrats, can identify problems early and can change that problem early on, to the extent that their problems will be resolved by the time they're in grade 1. And if we've done that, this is good for that child, good for their families, good for the educational system. It's a saving for the school system and for those families if we're able to identify and deal with problems with children at an early age. There will always be some excuse not to do this. In our view, it's long overdue. We should do it now, of course, but we have to do it right, and I'm going to get to that in a moment.

Nova Scotia and New Brunswick offer full-day programs for five-year-olds. British Columbia and PEI are

about to offer full-day programs for five-year-olds. We currently have 200 full-day kindergarten classes in Ontario's public system. Eight Catholic boards offer full-day kindergarten, and the French school boards have offered it for some time. So we are growing in our experience with these programs, and this will bring it to another level, absolutely.

The question for me, then, becomes: Are we doing it right? This is where I have had strong disagreement with the government, because I believe we're not doing it right. The government claims in its language to be doing so. The government claims and says, "We want to do this right." They say it, but they're not doing it in deeds, in actions. That's where I believe we're going to see problems in the implementation of this program, starting this coming September. Some of those problems are resolvable. It is a question of whether the government will commit to dealing with it, providing the adequate resources or not, or will simply use the government line that says, "We're taking our time. There are going to be wrinkles, as you know. We will get it right. It may take some time. Indeed, it may take another election for us to get it right." And if we elect the Liberals again, they will commit the resources to getting it right. That's what you're going to get.

I guarantee that come this September, when the government realizes all the many problems, they will start announcing, for their election of 2011, a greater commitment of resources in order to be able to do this right. They will say, "Elect us, and we will do it right." Guaranteed it's coming.

We don't think they're doing this well. By not doing it well, it feeds into those who do not want this program to succeed, and that, in my view, is unfortunate. We are literally arming the enemy against this program by the inadequate preparation of it, and I find that deplorable. I want to get to some of those questions.

The minister in her remarks yesterday said, "Our stakeholders, including members of the education sector"—no, no, that's the parliamentary assistant. Let's see what the minister had to say: "As a result of their input"—meaning deputations—"we have made amendments to clarify the role that third party providers may play going forward. I want to make it clear: Third party providers currently operating programs on school premises can continue to provide care and offer programs for children in other age groups, such as children six to 12 years of age, and to operate programs in schools for children of all ages beyond the regular school year. In addition, we intend to allow supporting regulations that would allow, on a transitional basis, those school boards that currently have third party operators providing programs on school premises to continue to offer before- and after-school programs for four- and five-year-olds."

0950

I want to say briefly to this point: The providers may have been worried about not being able to provide programs beyond JK and SK, but we don't believe that they were under threat. So the government and the minister

present it as if somehow, "We've listened to them, and we've protected those particular program providers from some taking away of a program that they have been doing for some time." It was never under threat, that I am aware of. So they moved an amendment saying yes, clarifying, "Don't worry; you'll be able to provide that."

But to the amendment that the member for Kitchener-Waterloo moved that would allow those providers to continue to provide programs for the four- and five-year-olds—they rejected that. So did I. I have reasons for that, as soon as I get to those amendments. But the government rejected the only amendment that would have responded to a genuine concern that various deputants made. So she says, "We intend to allow supporting regulations that would allow, on a transitional basis, those school boards that currently have third party operators." We made amendments that spoke to that, and they rejected our amendments. So now we are led to the belief or the conclusion that they have listened to the opposition party and listened to the deputants, but it will not be done in legislation; it will be done in regulation. Well, why could they not have supported an amendment that allows for that and give us the assurance and the security that that indeed would happen? They rejected all of our amendments. But if you listened to the minister and the parliamentary assistant, you would think that they were listening attentively to all of the deputants and what they had to say and that, indeed, because of their listening to these folks, they would support amendments offered by the opposition, were they themselves inclined to do so. In my view, they did not listen at all, and I have absolutely no faith that they will do so in regulation.

I was disappointed in my colleague from Kitchener-Conestoga, who said the valuable input and feedback of those who came to depute—the education sector, child care sector folks—"led our government to propose several amendments to Bill 242 to the standing committee, which considered the legislation before referring it to today's third reading." I want to say to the member from Kitchener-Conestoga, she was there. I debated it with her quite intensely, in fact. They made no amendments that had any value. They were inconsequential and administrative in nature. But if you read Hansard, for those specialists who read Hansard, you would think they did something. Indeed, they did not.

So I say to the good people of Ontario who are watching this program at 9:50 this morning—I'm sure that many of you are excited to watch this place so early in the morning, with your coffee in hand. Those of you who are watching, good citizens, these are the amendments, that I'm holding here. If you call us—you'll find us on the Web: the critic for the NDP, Rosario Marchese—you'll find the amendments. And you will see that the government had very little to say. In fact, if you're interested we can send you the transcript of the dialogue I had with the member from Kitchener-Conestoga. You will be somewhat enlightened, or surprised, to see the kind of dialogue that she and I had. I can send you the copy of that exchange we had, and I'd love to send you a

copy of the amendments so that you can see for yourselves what the government did by way of amendments. I repeat: They are irrelevant; inconsequential, if not useless. They didn't listen.

What they're saying is, "We listened to you, but we're going to make changes in regulation." As you know, regulations are up to the civil servants. We don't know when that's going to happen. We are about four and a half or five months away from September, and we don't know what our civil servants are going to do to solve fundamental questions connected to this bill. It is my view that it's not going to be dealt with very well. We have lots of questions with respect to, "Are we doing it right?"

We have waited a long time for this, and many families will wait another five years. That will put many children behind, assuming that it will be rolled out fully in five years. Charles Pascal said that we should do the rollout of full-time JK and SK in three years—not five, not 10, not 20, but three years. Charles Pascal is the author of the report from which these Liberals took—cherry-picked—some of those recommendations, and did not do the whole report as recommended by Charles Pascal. So the Liberals say now, "We are not going to do full-time JK and SK, including preschool and after-school programs, in three years. It'll be five." Guaranteed, it's not going to be done in five. It's likely to take longer. I don't think this is good.

Parents who have been waiting, parents and educators and early childhood educators and many others who wanted the full implementation of Charles Pascal are not getting that. They're only getting a couple of those recommendations that he made, and Charles Pascal said, "Do not cherry-pick. Do it all," because it was intended to deal with all of the programs, from birth to age 12. I think he had it right and I think his consultations led him to a very good conclusion. So the many families who have been waiting are going to have to wait a whole five years, and for that time a whole lot of mothers and fathers are going to be without a program that they could have and could enjoy and could benefit from.

Will the funding for the initial rollout be distributed equitably across the province, or will it go where there is space? Will the first programs be needs-based or just space-based? An important question, because we believe that government is going to find an easy way out to provide these programs. They're going to put them in schools where there is space, as opposed to where there is a need. That, to us, is an important distinction to make. Space, available space, is not about providing a program where the needs are great, but the government wants to show that this is an incredible program, that there is an incredible take-up in the first year, and, "Lo and behold, look how many have taken advantage of this," so they can say before an election that this program is working really, really well.

Mr. Michael Prue: Not in East York. There's not one; not one space.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The member from Beaches—East York says there's not going to be one program

available in his riding. It remains to be seen where the programs are going to be, because we don't have that data yet. But it is my view that they will be where there is space, not where there is a need, and we should be addressing the needs of those kids who deserve to have a better head start. Because of social and economic inequality, those kids who desperately need a head start may not be getting this program; indeed, they will not be getting this program. And as soon as we get those numbers, I won't have to prove it; you will see for yourselves that we are not dealing with this on the basis of need, but rather providing it where there's space so you can look good in your first year.

1000

We are concerned that the class size of 26 is an average, and we are concerned the class sizes may become too large, like many of our current grade 4 to grade 8 classes, where there is no cap. I will get to this as I get through my amendments.

It was a curious thing. The member from Kitchener—Conestoga and my good friend Rick Johnson from Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock simply said, "No, we shouldn't cap class sizes." He argued that from his experience with capping the primary grades, they have learned that it creates problems. I said to him, "That's a strange contradiction. Do you support capping in the early grades: Yes or no? And if you support capping in the early grades, is it not consistent to support capping for full-time JK and SK?" In my view, it would be. In their view, it wasn't.

The member for Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock—it's a big riding—had a different argument, which I'm sure in his two minutes he will respond to. But if you want to cap and you believe philosophically, from a program point of view, that it's important, then you should also cap the full-time JK and full-time SK classes. And if you need to make some adjustments, member from Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock—it's a big riding—then you make those adjustments. But why have two inconsistent philosophies around two programs in the primary grades? It makes no sense—

Mr. Rick Johnson: It's 13 to one.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It's 12 to one. Make your case. They say it's 13 to one; I say it's 12 to one. And I say to the member from this large riding that it's an average of 26: an average, Rick from Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock. I say to you that the average of 26—Michael is a former teacher. "Average" means it's an average.

Mr. Mike Colle: Some are up; some are down.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Yes. Some are up; some are down. My suspicion, Michael, is it will be up most of the time. And you know why? You want to save some money. I know that and I understand that, but say that. Say, "I want to save some money because we're broke as a government." If you said that, I'd say, "Okay." I could make a case against it, which I will and could, but say that. Don't tell me, "But what would you do if you had one child over the capping? Then you'd have to have a

separate class over the cap." You dealt with that little problemo in the early primary grades.

Mr. Rick Johnson: Split grades.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Okay. If Rick Johnson from the large riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock is against split grades, he should say so, because half of our system is in split grades, and I agree with him. Half of our system—

Mr. Rick Johnson: I'm opposed to split grades.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Are you opposed to it?

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I'm feeling left out again.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The dialogue gets longer, so it's hard. We have to do it through the Speaker, you understand. It's complicated.

So I don't know. He has his own arguments, but I don't agree with him, and this is why we love debates. I believe that we should cap those numbers because, I've got to tell you, an average of 26, which could go to 30, teacher from the north, which would go to 31, 32, 33—it could go to 33, because there's no cap. You understand. If there is no cap, they could go to any number that the school system deems acceptable, because what are you going to do? If you've got 33, you've got 33. Think about it, Speaker, because you're a father. You were a father to little kids at one point, four-year-olds. Michael, you too—indeed, so many of you. Think about it.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Are you still speaking?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Jim, you too. You were a teacher.

Four-year-olds in a classroom that was designed for 20 kids: Let's say, maybe squeeze in 22. Okay; you want to push it a little more: Squeeze in 23. Classrooms that were designed for 20, 21, 22: We're going to squeeze in 26, on average, and maybe 30 and more. Little kiddies, four-year-olds, who have to sleep, because you know that four-year-olds sleep from time to time—

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: They're almost your height now.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: And your height, too.

They get tired, because it's a long day. They get dropped off at 7:30 a.m., when the parents can afford it—and I'll get to that—and they get to go home at 6 o'clock in the evening—little four-year-olds. I think they have more energy than some of the MPPs; this is true. I understand that. But still, in spite of the energy that some of the four-year-olds might have, they get tired and they want to sleep. Where are we going to put these little kiddies to sleep in that little classroom?

By the way, they'll want to eat at some point. Lunchtime—

Mr. Mike Colle: Snacks.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Snacks. Nutritious, Michael. I think you supported that the other day when you spoke about the terrible foods that kids are eating, right?

So you want to have nutritious foods. Where are we going to accommodate that? By the way, little kids need to go to the washroom. Some of those classrooms don't have washrooms self-contained. They've got to go some-

where, and someone has to take them. There's one teacher and one early childhood educator in the classroom. They have to sleep; they whine and cry for mama, usually, sometimes papa but less so; usually mama. They cry and they need attention, and you've got an average of 26, and it could be 30 or 33, four-year-olds. They say, "It's okay not to have any caps. Just let 'er rip. Bring them in." Four-year-olds: 7:30 a.m. to 6 o'clock in the evening in a little classroom—inadequate space. I've got to tell you, I was a bit incensed.

By the way, did the government members support my amendment, which I will get to, perhaps, tomorrow? They didn't. No. And every now and then I look for some Liberal to break ranks, because I did that in opposition many years ago. I'm still very careful about how we do that with opposition members because I think we should throw them a few crumbs every now and then, and just say, "Yeah, that's a good amendment. We can do that." Every now and then—think about it—throw a few crumbs to the opposition.

The member from Oakville has done that on a couple of bills that we have dealt with, and I think he made a serious effort. I think it's due to him that we were able to get some changes. He couldn't get them all, of course, because you're up against ministers and others. So it's hard; I understand that. But I think, where possible, members should accommodate the opposition because sometimes we have some good things to say—of course, not always, but sometimes. So don't forget: Throw a little generosity across the table from time to time.

On the capping, there was no generosity bestowed upon me on this one, or indeed any other amendment I made.

Other questions: Charles Pascal called for an early-years division in the Ministry of Education to develop and implement a coordinated policy around child care—coordinated policy. We know that what the government has announced falls short of the complete integrated child care plan that Pascal put forward. Sadly, because we have not implemented his recommendations, we are going to find ourselves with many, many problemos in September; I guarantee it. Charles Pascal knew this. He knew it then; he knows it today. I wish he had the freedom to come forward and talk about what he feels about what the government has done by way of cherry-picking. It would be nice if he were given the freedom to come and speak freely on this matter.

1010

We are still awaiting the details of the actual form the typical class will take. We want to see the actual distribution of the workload between the teacher and the early childhood educator. We don't know what that distribution is going to be. We've got one teacher, one early childhood educator. We've got a seamless day, presumably, from the preschool to the after-school programs, which Charles Pascal recommended. He said it has to be provided by the school board and it should be seamless. Pascal said those programs before school and after school should be provided by those who have the skill to do it.

Jim, how can one teacher—you've been there—and one early childhood educator provide this seamless day from 7:30 in the morning to 6 o'clock in the evening? It can't be done, right? It can't be done.

You have a teacher who's obligated to be there 15 minutes earlier but is not in charge of the preschool programs. That is not her or his responsibility. He or she is not responsible for the after-school programs. Take the teacher out, and who is left? One early childhood educator. It stands to reason, Michael, that one person can't do that program, right?

Mr. Michael Prue: That's right.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: If one teacher can't do it, how can one early childhood educator provide the preschool, during-school-day-hours and after-school programs? It can't be done.

So what is the government going to do? They haven't told us. What are boards going to do, the poor boards that have to take on the responsibility of resolving their problems? I'll tell you what they're going to do. They're just going to hire any person who is available to come into the classroom: a grandmother, perhaps; a mother who is at home, who might have the time to be able to do that, possibly.

I do not think that it's a bad thing to have a grandmother do this or some person who is available, male or female, to come and do this. I don't think it's a problem, except they will not have what Pascal recommended, and that is having an early childhood education background so that you provide an intelligent program that works for kids before and after school. You will not get that.

That's what boards will do. They will hire cheap labour and anyone that they can find. Whether they are adequate or not will be irrelevant to them, because they will be obligated, as a board, to find someone.

The minister says, "You shall do that," and boards will do it in the best way they can. They will not have the resources to do it, but they must do it by law, whether they like it or not. That's the problem that we are faced with when a government introduces a program that is good in principle and will fail in practice because they're not putting the thought to it and the resources to it.

Consideration must be given to the potential loss of revenue for daycares, which may put them at risk or drive up costs to parents whose children remain in daycares. When you pull out the four- and the five-year-olds from those child care centres, they will lose important revenue that allows them to maintain an adequate program that they provide for all those kids in all the different ages. You take the JK, the four- and the five-year-olds, out, and you immediately leave those child care centres without the adequate resources to do so. It means rates are likely to go up. Parents can't afford the fee now. Imagine when rates shoot up through the roof. Some child care centres may close.

I offered an amendment that would offer transitional support, stabilization funds, that would have taken care of those concerns that Charles Pascal knew would happen if you don't implement the whole of the implemen-

tation of the report that he gave to this government. He knew that. My amendment was defeated by the government. The minister says, "Don't worry. We will do this in regulation." Okay; I feel better already.

You see, I don't trust the government, whether they be Liberals or somebody else—I don't. Because if they wanted to do what the minister said that she would do—

Hon. James J. Bradley: O ye of little faith.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Exactly—and Jim was the same when he was in opposition.

If the minister claims that she wants to do it in regulation, then guarantee it in the bill. Then you make me feel better. It might not happen, but you'll make me feel better, because it's in the bill; it's law.

So if she can say it—oh, my God, it's 10:15 already. See how time passes? Speaker, I thank you. We'll resume the debate another day.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 8, this House is in recess until 10:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1016 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to welcome John Craven and his daughter Julie Craven, of Brantford, to the chamber today. Julie is our leader's nominee as a 2010 recipient of the Victim Services Award of Distinction. We congratulate Julie and all the recipients. And I want all the members to have a look at her necklace. Mother's Day is coming.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: In addition to Julie Craven, I want to introduce Gwendolyn Broadmore, Sylvie Huntley, Penny Fisher, the Family Violence Project of Waterloo Region, Guelph-Wellington Women in Crisis, and the Sexual Assault Centre for Quinte and District. Those individuals and organizations are represented here in the gallery, or will be, to observe the proceedings. They were all recipients of Victim Services Awards of Distinction.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I'm pleased to introduce to you my friend of over 50 years, Joan McGavin. Joan lives in Burlington now and has some interest in hearing question period live. Welcome, Joan.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I trust the members will co-operate so that she can hear question period. The member for Parkdale-High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'd like to introduce Reverend Judy Shand of the United Church of Canada, visiting for the day.

Mr. Rick Johnson: I'd like to introduce two guests who are here with me today: John Ekins, who runs the "youth success through employment" program, and one of his students, Matt daSilva, who has been helping out at my office in the beautiful city of Lindsay.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's my pleasure today to welcome one of the bravest people I know, and that is

seven-year-old Jack Yeilding. He's the founder of Jack's Lemonade Stand. It has raised more than \$150,000 in the last year for the SickKids Foundation, and Jack is with us in the west members' gallery.

Mr. Dave Levac: It's going to be very difficult to top Jack. But, Jack, congratulations, my little buddy.

I would also like to introduce, or reintroduce, my constituents from the riding of Brant, tremendous advocates for victims' services: Julie Craven and John Craven, who were instrumental in having Bill 89 passed. I appreciate their presence here today.

Hon. James J. Bradley: It is my pleasure to introduce members of the family of Max Silverberg, who is one of the highly competent pages here today. They are Aaron Silverberg, father; Jeffery Joseph and Irene Joseph, grandparents; Jerry Silverberg and Iona Silverberg, grandparents; and David Silverberg, uncle. There's a full delegation here today. If they're in, we should get them to rise and we'll all applaud.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: On behalf of Tudor Mititelu, a page from my riding of Ottawa South, I'm pleased to welcome his mother, Corina Mititelu, to Queen's Park today. Welcome.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'd like to introduce individually the folks who are here from Guelph-Wellington Women in Crisis, who are here today to receive an award: Sly Castaldi, who is the executive director; Anthea Milliken, who is on the board; and their nominator, Jennifer MacLeod from public health in Guelph.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Walking through those doors, I know about 50-some-odd people from the Probus Club of Port Hope are here to visit Queen's Park. They're going to buy me lunch.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I take this opportunity on behalf of the member from Welland and page Darcy Feagan to welcome her mother, Mary Anne Feagan, and her father, Mike Feagan, to the gallery today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

WEARING OF RIBBONS

Hon. Deborah Matthews: This week is Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Week. I would like to seek unanimous consent for members to wear a green ribbon to display our commitment to saving lives and raising awareness for organ and tissue donation.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

ORAL QUESTIONS

PHARMACISTS

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question to the Premier: Can Premier McGuinty guarantee that no pharmacies will close as a result of his proposed cuts to services at neighbourhood pharmacies across our province?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: No, I can't offer that kind of a guarantee, and I think my honourable colleague understands that. But what we can guarantee is that we will reduce the price of drugs for the people of Ontario. That's a benefit not just to taxpayers who pay for drugs through the public plan, but for private plans as well, and for people who have families who are paying out of pocket.

What I can guarantee as well is that all the savings that we generate through lower-cost drugs we will reinvest into covering more drugs. We have covered 177 more so far. We'll use savings to cover still more drugs. We'll reinvest other parts into other parts of the health care system. It's about ensuring that every precious health care dollar goes as far as we can possibly make it go.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: The Premier refuses to guarantee to Ontario seniors and Ontario families that pharmacies will not close as a result of his plans to reduce pharmacy front-line services across our province. It is no surprise that in their recent consultations in Ontario, the McGuinty Liberals are quoted as saying in a presentation on pharmacare that Ontario has "more pharmacies per capita than many other developed countries in the world." That's not even fine print from the fine-print Premier. This is very clear: The McGuinty government thinks we have too many pharmacies in our province, probably too many pharmacists in our province, and has a plan to reduce the number of neighbourhood pharmacies in our province.

Premier, will you come clean? How many pharmacies is too many, how many are you going to close, and in what parts of the province will you be closing neighbourhood pharmacies?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think Ontarians should be disappointed that the leader of the official opposition is not prepared to stand up for lower drug costs for all Ontarians.

There's a new part to the change that we're proposing and we'd like to have adopted in Ontario. I think there's some really good news in this for Ontario's pharmacists. We think that they can play an ever-greater role in helping us to deliver ever-better health care to our families. We think that they can take on more professional responsibilities, quite apart from preparing medication and providing that to Ontarians. We want to pay them, for example, to refill prescriptions. We want to pay them, for the first time, to provide inoculations. We want to pay them to take consultations with their patients—and there are other things, undoubtedly, that they can do on behalf of our families. We see an exciting new role that our pharmacists can expand upon here in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, I'll tell you where the Ontario PC caucus stands: It stands with Ontario families. It stands with Ontario seniors. It stands with Ontario's worried moms and dads who are going to fight Dalton McGuinty's plans to close down neighbourhood pharma-

cies in the province of Ontario each and every step of the way.

And, Premier, it's not just us, and it's not just Ontario families. In addition, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business wrote to your health minister. Ontario's director, Satinder Chera, said that your plans to cut health costs on the backs of pharmacists "will make it nearly impossible for an independent pharmacist to provide for their families, patients and the local community."

1040

Premier, will you finally come clean? How many pharmacies are you closing down and in what part of our province do you plan to close neighbourhood pharmacies?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to say that we're heartened to have the support of Ontario's nurses when it comes to this initiative, heartened to have the support of the people at the Heart and Stroke Foundation and at the cancer foundation, where we're happy to have that support as well. The Canadian Association of Retired Persons: We're very pleased to have their support as well.

Fundamentally, this is all about ensuring that we can do more to make our health care dollar go further. The fact of the matter is, we're paying too much for drugs in Ontario—25% to 75% more than they are in other parts of the world. I think my honourable colleague understands that we need to do something to come to grips with the rapid growth of costs of the health care system, and we think that a very good place for us to turn our attention is the fact that we're paying too much for drugs.

PHARMACISTS

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier: Sadly, the Premier refuses to disclose any information he has on how many pharmacies in our province will close down and where they will be. But there is some information I know the Premier does have.

Premier, you have forced Ontario pharmacists into a gag order. They have brought forward proposals to lower drug costs and improve services to Ontario patients as part of negotiations. You forced them to sign a confidentiality agreement—a nondisclosure clause. So, Premier, since you won't let the pharmacists tell their story, could you please tell us what the pharmacists put on the table and what you had against their ideas to improve—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The members on the government side will please come to order. Stop the clock.

Start the clock.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Start the clock, stop the clock.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Excuse me, member from Renfrew. The clock management works both ways for all members in the House.

Premier.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think the pharmacies are very capable of getting out their message and the infor-

mation that they want to convey. We in government have a responsibility to get out our perspective on this as well.

I think it's important to bring it down to something that we can all understand. Our most common blood pressure medication here in Ontario: Ontarians are paying 50 cents for a dose. In the US, they pay 10 cents for the same pill, one dose. In New Zealand, they pay two cents for that dose.

As a parent, I recall picking up amoxicillin many times over for my kids. The cost today in Ontario is \$10.25. After the reform, it will be \$5.13. For type II diabetes, there is a drug with a cost of \$177 today; after the reforms, it will be \$70.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, here's what Ontario families also understand: that they cannot access those drugs and those services when Dalton McGuinty is closing down neighbourhood pharmacies in the province of Ontario.

Premier, you have put a gag order on Ontario pharmacists, and instead of bringing forward into the public debate good ideas to help reduce drug costs and improve front-line services, you've gone on YouTube with a propaganda campaign attacking neighbourhood pharmacists in our province and disrupting services to Ontario patients.

Premier, I will ask: Will you rescind your gag order and let Ontario families decide for themselves whether to believe the pharmacists or to believe the Premier, well-known for saying one thing and doing the opposite?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, the pharmacists and the pharmacies are free to provide whatever information they think is appropriate to Ontarians as we engage in a very important public debate.

My colleague says that he's concerned about access. To the best of my knowledge, in New Zealand, where that particular medication costs two cents per dose, New Zealanders are getting access to that medication. To the best of my knowledge, in the US, where they're paying 10 cents for the same medication for which we're paying 50 cents in Ontario, they're getting access to that medication.

My concern is not ensuring that we have access. I'm absolutely confident that we will continue to have access to all the medication we need. My concern is the cost associated with the drugs we're paying for in Ontario. It's time we got those costs down. That's what this initiative is all about.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: We know that the Dalton McGuinty government believes that there are too many pharmacies in the province of Ontario. We know you must believe, then, that there are too many pharmacists in the province of Ontario.

Premier, it sounds like you're saying—and I hope you did say this—that you will rescind the gag order on Ontario pharmacists so Ontario patients can hear the full story. I hope we've accomplished that in question period today.

And let me ask you this, Premier: Will you set aside your plan to close down neighbourhood pharmacies in our great province? Will you set aside your plan to reduce front-line pharmacy services, and get back to the table today to come up with a good plan to reduce drug costs and improve front-line services to Ontario seniors and worried moms and dads?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: There's one thing we know with absolute certainty: that the status quo is a non-starter. When I was first elected 20 years ago, 32 cents of every program dollar went into health care; today it's 46 cents. They tell us that in 12 years, if we allow things to keep on going the way we have been, we'll be paying 70 cents of every program dollar on health care. That will crowd out the funding that we need for our schools, for our roads, for supports for our vulnerable and the like.

The last time we brought forward this kind of initiative, in 2006, the pharmacies claimed that it would compromise the viability of their stores. Since 2006 and those reforms, we now have 144 more pharmacies in the province of Ontario. By the way, we've expanded drug coverage to 177 more drugs with the savings that we have.

It's about getting drug costs down. We think we owe that to the people of Ontario.

TAXATION

Mr. Howard Hampton: This question is to the Premier. The people of Ontario's First Nations live under some of the lowest-income conditions in the province, and the Premier's decision to implement the HST with respect to First Nations will make their lives even more difficult. A study released today shows that the HST will take at least \$120 million a year out of First Nation communities.

My question: Why didn't the Premier consult with First Nations before hitting them with this unfair new tax, the HST?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: First of all, I want to take the opportunity to welcome some of the leaders of our First Nations communities, who I understand are visiting Queen's Park today. I want to reassure them once again that we are on the same side on this particular issue.

We've had a standing practice in Ontario, since forever, I believe, which exempts our First Nation communities from the PST in certain circumstances. We think that exemption ought to be extended now and have full application under the HST. That's our position. That's why we are working with our First Nations communities in urging the federal government to adopt the practice, which we think is fair, and which we'd like to have maintained under the new regime.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Howard Hampton: The Premier says that he's doing all he can. When the McGuinty Liberals faced anti-HST backlash from the real estate industry, the Premier very quickly exempted homes that cost up to \$400,000 from the HST. When Tim Hortons protested against the

HST on the coffee and muffin lunch, the McGuinty Liberals very quickly exempted restaurant meals up to \$4 in value from the HST.

1050

If you care about the plight of First Nations, why will you not act just as quickly to exempt First Nations from the HST?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleague is comparing apples to oranges. In the example that he has raised, those are circumstances over which we had complete control. When it comes to this particular circumstance, it's something over which the federal government ultimately has control. That's why we are working with our First Nations communities to encourage the federal government to adopt the practice that we've had here in Ontario, which we think is very fair and is one that we'd like to see extended into the future.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Mr. Howard Hampton: Again, the Premier tries to confuse the issue. The Premier didn't have to consult with the federal government when the McGuinty Liberals decided to exempt homes under \$400,000 from the HST, you didn't have to consult with the federal government when you decided to exempt the Tim Hortons under-\$4 lunch from the HST and you don't have to consult with the federal government now. You have the capacity now to say that under the room that Ontario has for exemptions, you could exempt First Nations across Ontario from the HST. Why won't you do it, Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I've already given this answer, and I'll restate it to my honourable colleague: It is not a matter over which we have control. It's something that the federal government has control over. It's how they pay the tax.

We provided a point-of-sale exemption. What the federal government is insisting is that the First Nation communities in fact make that payment, and they're talking about reimbursing it subsequently. What the First Nations communities are seeking is the same arrangement that we had with them, so they didn't have to pay it in the first place. We think that's simpler, we think it's more cost-effective from a regulatory perspective, and that's why we'd like to have it continued in the future.

Again, we will continue to work with the federal government to have them adopt a practice that we had in place.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. The McGuinty government has broken another promise and ripped \$4 billion out of Toronto's Transit City over the next five years. We know whom these cuts will hurt: the million-plus modest-income families in Toronto who can't afford to live near subway lines. Why is the government making them bear the burden of the deficit?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. I know that she gathered some folks last night to stir the pot on this issue once again.

The fact is that we have not cut the funding from these projects. We are going to be continuing these projects. What we did was that we delayed some of the cash flow. We are working with Metrolinx right now. When the plan comes out—and there is going to be a plan; we are going to be demonstrating the plan—my guess is that the members opposite will be opposed to the plan as well. But the reality is that we have had to put a delay in place. The cash will flow. It will stretch over a bit longer period of time, but those projects will go ahead.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I would ask that the Minister of Transportation table the exact date that that money will be delivered to the city of Toronto.

The McGuinty government is the only Ontario government ever, other than Harris's, that has refused to put one dime towards the Toronto transit budget this year. In fact, transit cuts made up three quarters of cuts to infrastructure spending in the recent budget—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The Minister of Municipal Affairs. Members will please come to order.

Please continue.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I repeat: the only Ontario government other than Harris that has refused to put one dime towards the Toronto transit budget this year. In fact, transit cuts made up three quarters of the cuts to infrastructure spending in the recent budget. Why is the lack of affordable transit and increasing smog so absolutely unimportant to this government?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm just going to read out some of the investments that we have made in the city of Toronto in previous years and in this year.

Since 2003, we've invested \$172 million to revitalize Union Station, which last time I looked was in the city of Toronto. We committed \$416 million towards the replacement of 204 TTC streetcars. We're moving ahead on the Sheppard East LRT. We're moving on our \$874-million investment in expanding the Georgetown South corridor, which will serve thousands of Ontarians, which the member opposite has opposed at every single turn.

On top of that, \$870 million in funding to support the extension of the Toronto-York-Spadina subway from Downsview to the Vaughan corporate centre—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Our information comes directly from the mayor's office and the offices of the TTC, and we're talking about this year. I would love to hear the transportation minister engage with the mayor.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Oh, this year.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: That's what I said.

Toronto transit riders will be packing Toronto city hall—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I think one of the reasons some of you couldn't hear her supplementary question was because of the noise coming from the government side.

Members will please come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Peterborough.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Sorry.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Please continue.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Toronto transit riders will be packing Toronto city hall tonight to say no to rising transit fares, no to delays to new light rail lines, no to aging buses prone to breakdowns and delay and no to broken transit promises from the McGuinty government.

Will the minister attend the meeting, listen to the concerns of transit riders first-hand and finally acknowledge the serious harm this government is doing by cutting Transit City funding?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let me just comment on gas tax money, which is ongoing, permanent funding since 2004: \$687.7 million has gone into the city of Toronto for gas tax, \$164 million last year. That money is ongoing.

I think the point needs to be made, because the member opposite is talking about working with Toronto: What we need is the mayor of Toronto, councillors in Toronto and the city of Toronto to be working with us and to be working with Metrolinx. Unless we have that kind of collaborative process, we will not be able to make the best decisions for Toronto. We welcome that kind of co-operation. We look forward to that kind of co-operation as Metrolinx develops a plan to build the projects that I am absolutely confident the member opposite will absolutely support.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is for the Premier. Because the McGuinty Liberals are bad planners, you took a billion dollars that could have gone to front-line health care and handed it to Liberal-friendly eHealth consultants who didn't deliver.

Because of bad planning, you let local health integration networks take money from front-line care and hand it out to consultants after you said the practice was banned.

Because of bad planning, you're now looking to find money through cuts to front-line care for seniors and people with chronic illnesses.

Premier, how do you plan to deal with pressures on emergency rooms that will see more seniors and people with chronic illnesses as a result of your cuts to front-line health care and pharmacare?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I welcome this opportunity to talk about how important these changes are to our health care system. The changes that we are proposing,

when it comes to drug prices, will lower the cost of drugs for people. That will improve our ability to fund more drugs for more people. It will also allow us to invest more in our health care system.

I think it's important the member opposite understands that this practice of so-called professional allowances is something that we started looking at back in 2006, through Bill 102. Through Bill 102, we have the actual power to understand how the money that was given to pharmacists was being invested. Only 30% of the money being received by pharmacies in professional allowances has actually been spent on that kind of care.

1100

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: What the minister fails to mention when she talks about the so-called professional allowances is the fact that they were set up by this government in the first place.

Back to the question: If the McGuinty Liberals had been more interested in delivering eHealth than in delivering a series of contracts to their Liberal-friendly consultants, then ePrescribing would have been up and running, and if their priority was patients rather than wasteful bureaucracy to give them political cover for the Premier's cuts to nurses and emergency rooms, they would scrap the LHINs, use the money and put it back into front-line health care, including pharmacy.

Because Premier McGuinty closed emergency rooms in Fort Erie and Port Colborne, seniors and patients with chronic illnesses can't afford to lose the one-on-one counselling they get from pharmacists. Premier, why are you making seniors and patients with chronic illness suffer from your own failure to plan and deliver—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: These reforms are all about getting better access to better care for the people of Ontario. The people of Ontario are paying far more for drugs than people in other parts of the world. When people start to understand how much more they're paying, I think they would say that it's up to their MPPs to actually bring those prices down, and that's what we are doing.

I have many examples of what drug prices are today and what they will be after the reform. There's a drug for diabetes—and I apologize for my difficulty with the pronunciation—called Pioglitazone. Currently, someone would pay \$1,253 for that drug. Once our reforms are complete, they will pay \$313, for a savings of \$940. This—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

FOREST INDUSTRY

Mr. Howard Hampton: My question is for the Premier. AbitibiBowater intends to sell its value-added Fort William division paper mill for scrap metal. Three hundred and fifty-three people lost good jobs when the

mill shut down three years ago. Two years ago, the union worked with a prospective buyer and even hammered out a collective agreement, but the takeover fell through. I would argue that it's in Ontario's interest for the mill to be making value-added paper, not sold off for scrap metal. My question: Has the Premier actively sought buyers and operators for this value-added paper mill?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I appreciate the question. Certainly I very much empathize with the workers and their families, who were obviously hoping that this operation would get back up and running. I think the actions that were taken by AbitibiBowater demonstrate the challenges that are faced by a company that's in CCAA protection. This was a tough business decision.

The member made reference to some efforts that were made to have a value-added operation up and running. We made many efforts to work with them as well. Ultimately, that was not able to happen. But our government continues to work very closely with the forestry sector in terms of increasing competitiveness, in terms of providing those opportunities. We will continue to do that with all aspects of the forestry sector.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Howard Hampton: The minister says that the government is actively working. We released freedom-of-information details yesterday that show that most of the money you boast is available to help re-establish and reposition forest industry jobs is sitting in a Toronto bank account; it hasn't been used. In fact, in this particular case, Abitibi is saying that they will sell the mill, but it can't be used to produce paper.

I ask again: When half of the money that the government promised to help re-establish forest industry jobs is sitting in a bank account in Toronto, and when Abitibi is saying, "Oh, we'll sell the mill, but it can't be used to produce value-added paper," has the government really done anything to help these workers in this community?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: We very much have. We've provided significant support to a number of companies, including AbitibiBowater over the years, as you know, through the electricity rebate program, providing significant funds to all their operations in Ontario. I think it is important to remind the member that, indeed, our measures have flowed over \$600 million through our incentives to the forestry sector—and over \$870 million through our loan guarantee prosperity programs that has been leveraged as a result of our programs as well.

The fact is, we continue to support the industry in a significant way. That is why we are so keen to put Ontario's wood to work. That's why we put forward a competitive wood supply process. That's why, indeed, we're reviewing the forest tenure process in the province as well, because we recognize more companies need opportunities, new entrants to get back to work. That's our goal. That's what we're working on. You can expect some good announcements soon.

DIABETES TREATMENT

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. We know that too many Ontarians are being diagnosed with type 1 and type 2 diabetes every year. In your last response to a question from the member from Whitby–Oshawa, you had a chance just to begin expressing some of those concerns. Diabetes management has been one of the major areas of health spending for this government. I have constituents wondering how the new drug reform policy is going to affect their ability to pay for diabetes drugs. These important drugs allow them to continue living a lifestyle to which they've become accustomed.

We know that this drug reform is a much-needed change that will help lower the cost of generic drugs throughout the province. However, my constituents wonder how this reform will affect their family members who have diabetes and already pay large sums of money for purchasing proper medication, as well as blood sugar strips, needles and other important tools that go along with monitoring diabetes.

Will the minister please explain to the House—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Diabetes is a disease that affects many Ontario families. It's a disease that should be manageable with the right drugs. We want to make sure that those drugs are available at a fair price. That's why our drug reform policy is the right thing to do. It's the most important initiative our government has taken to bring down the cost of drugs in Ontario.

Today, a patient would pay an out-of-pocket price of \$177 for metformin, a commonly used drug for diabetes patients. After our proposed reforms, the price would drop to \$70. This would save diabetes patients, on this one drug alone, \$107. This is a savings we can pass on to Ontarians. It's absolutely the right thing to do for the people of Ontario, including people with diabetes.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I appreciate the minister's response, and I know that my constituents will be extremely supportive of the increased savings of the drug reform plan.

In my riding, constituents ask me about our plan for diabetes and what we're doing as a government to help their family members who are living with this disease. I know our diabetes strategy has been extremely effective in improving the lives of Ontarians with diabetes. However, there's always room for improvement.

Could the minister please tell this House and the people of Ontario what this government is doing to help Ontarians who are living with diabetes?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We're working very hard to make sure that Ontarians with diabetes get access to the best supports that will delay or prevent the onset of complications related to diabetes. We've nearly tripled funding for diabetes since we were elected in 2003. We've created 204 diabetes education teams across the

province in family health teams, community health centres and hospitals, helping patients with diabetes to manage their disease effectively. We became the first province to fully fund insulin pumps for children and youth with type 1 diabetes, and we've expanded the program to include adults with type 1 diabetes. We're investing \$741 million into a diabetes strategy that includes public education, expanded services, a diabetes registry, the expansion of bariatric surgery, expansion of the insulin pump—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question?

CURRICULUM

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: My question is to the Premier. The McGuinty Liberals have been caught making changes to the elementary school curriculum that will see a new sex education curriculum introduced beginning in grade 1. When the Minister of Education was asked about this change, she said, "I am not a teacher, but we have worked very hard with experts to understand best what age-appropriate language and topics are." It appears the only group you didn't consult with were parents.

Why were parents not included in consultations and decision-making about these changes to the sexual education curriculum?

1110

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Education.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: It's very important that I'm able to state in this Legislature for the people of Ontario that in fact we have been consulting extensively since September 2007 in our process to review the curriculum. We have consulted with dozens of groups, including parent groups, faculties of education, universities and colleges. We have consulted with the Ontario Physical and Health Education Association, with the Ontario Healthy Schools Coalition—made up of parents, I might add—and the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health.

I would say that the draft curriculum was revised in both English and in French. Educators, parents and all stakeholders from across the province had the opportunity to provide feedback on the—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Again, my question is to the Premier because I do believe this is a very important issue for parents in the province of Ontario.

It has now become abundantly clear to parents—and these are parents across the whole province; we are seeing emails coming in, once they have been alerted to the fact this is happening—that it looks like you tried to bury this when you publicize everything else. In fact, this past week the government announced the third annual ChangeTheWorld campaign, an anti-smoking campaign, the opening of an OPP detachment, the launch of the health minister's YouTube; you made education an-

nouncements, the EcoSchools partnership and honouring youth role models.

If this is so important and necessary, why was there no huge public announcement telling parents what you were going to do in September?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I'm very happy that the honourable member acknowledges all of the great work that's being done by the government. That is one way that we get the information out.

With respect to the consultation, we have consulted with parents. As a result of our consultations we have received some 2,400 responses. I would also say to the honourable member, yes, there's no question that it's an issue that generates a great deal of discussion and debate. I think it's important that parents continue to be aware and involved in what their children are learning. We encourage them to be engaged at the school with the teachers. If, for whatever reason, parents do not feel comfortable with what is in the curriculum, they can say to their child's teacher that they do not want them to be a part of that particular strand.

LABOUR DISPUTE

M^{re} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le ministre du Développement du Nord, des Mines et des Forêts. People in Sudbury are all talking about the escalating conflict in the labour dispute between Vale Inco and USW since Vale has announced that it will resume full production in Sudbury using replacement workers.

This government has been completely hands-off during this nine-month-long labour dispute. But the minister sets the rule for mining; the province has a constitutional right to oversee mining. When is the minister going to take notice of what is happening in Sudbury? When is he going to get involved? Because right now, by his indifference, he is in fact saying that it is perfectly acceptable for multinational corporations to engage in this kind of economic blackmail.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: To the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: To the member's question, the Ministry of Labour has been there all along assisting with the parties, focusing on resolving the differences. That's where the focus has to stay: The focus has to stay with the parties so that they can understand each other, so that they can work towards common ground so that they can get a collective agreement done.

The collective agreement process is something that we highly respect. I can tell the member that our ministry will do all that we can to help the parties address those differences that they have so that the workers can get back to work and we can move on beyond this dispute.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

M^{re} France Gélinas: Well, I've said it before and I'll say it again: How is it going so far? It's been nine months and one week.

People in Sudbury are saying that Vale Inco is using its economic powers to do economic violence to the

people of Sudbury, and the McGuinty government is standing by, letting it happen.

When corporations like GM and Chrysler come to this government and say that they're in trouble, they get front-row seats. The government listens to them, helps them out. They even hand out hundreds of millions of dollars. But when workers come to this government and say that they are in trouble, they are completely ignored.

Why does this government lend its ears to other groups, corporations, professional organizations, but when it comes to workers on strike in Sudbury, they continue to get ignored?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: We do have a deep understanding of how this is affecting the community, affecting the workers, affecting that business. I've gotten that deep understanding from Rick Bartolucci, who has been a tremendous advocate for everyone, all sides in the community. My focus will continue to be to assist and work with the parties.

The member's question speaks to not respecting the collective bargaining process. On this side of the House we do respect the collective bargaining process. As well, through the Ministry of Labour, our mediation and conciliation team, we are always there to assist the parties to overcome whatever differences they may have and help get those workers back onto the job site and working.

VICTIMS OF CRIME

Mrs. Liz Sandals: My question is for the Attorney General. It's important that victims of crime in Ontario receive the supports and services they need, when and where they need them most. We are particularly aware this week, which is National Victims of Crime Awareness Week, during which we recognize the effort of thousands of professionals, volunteers and community organizations that offer victims of crime their time, assistance, guidance and advice.

Those who deliver these services must be given the tools they need to carry out this vital work. Can the Attorney General tell this House what the government is doing to ensure that victims of crime and their families receive the support they need and are treated with compassion as they overcome trauma and begin to rebuild their lives?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: The member for Guelph asks a very important question and asks us all to see that the services for victims are available in the way that victims require them. So, when the first horrific incident happens, the victims' quick-response program will be there to provide immediate financial assistance, and the victims' crisis assistance and referral service will be there for them, to refer them to the service they need in that very crucial, immediate aftermath of the horrific incident. Every year thousands benefit from that.

The victim witness assistance program helps take them through the court process, which can be very challenging even for some lawyers, but for those who aren't experts in the law, very challenging.

I would like to specifically thank the police, the ministry staff, government staff and all those community agencies that support victims every single day of the year, for the great work that they do.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to hear that our government is funding initiatives to provide the necessary support to victims of crime. It's important that we support the dedicated individuals and community organizations that are working each day to provide this support. I know that this work is benefiting people throughout the province. I'm particularly proud of the work being done by Guelph-Wellington Women in Crisis, where vital support services are being delivered by truly admirable volunteers and professionals.

One of the keys to providing the right support at the right time is listening to the victims as well as community groups and individuals who deal directly with victims. They can give us the best advice and help us to provide the most meaningful services and supports. Can the Attorney General tell us what the government is doing to recognize the people who are making such a real difference on the front lines?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: This morning, my colleague from Guelph and I and a number of members of the Legislature stood with the recipients of the Victim Services Awards of Distinction, given out by the Attorney General on behalf of all members of the Legislature to say thank you, to recognize, for this day, in a special way, the extraordinary contributions that have been made through their courage, their perseverance, their drive, in ways that have changed for the better the lives of the system of justice, of different communities in coping with the needs of victims, and of the services available to victims throughout the province of Ontario.

1120

I want to say thank you specifically on behalf of all to these recipients of distinction. If I could just take a second and thank again Julie Craven, Gwendolyn Broadmore, Sylvie Huntley, Penny Fisher, the Family Violence Project of Waterloo region, the Guelph-Wellington Women in Crisis, and the Sexual Assault Centre for Quinte and District.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Ted Arnott: My question is for the Premier. This government's flawed and undemocratic Green Energy Act has ignited a surge of wind farm proposals, pitting neighbour against neighbour and tearing communities apart. The government's policy is uncoordinated and will lead to a massive increase in our hydro bills for years to come. There are legitimate concerns about the potential risk to human health, the economic cost and the denial of real opportunity for public input.

Today in the chamber we have residents of the Bellwood area in Centre Wellington township who want an answer to a simple question: Why won't the government place a moratorium on wind farm approvals until

they complete a comprehensive and credible epidemiological study on their health effects?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I thank the honourable member for his question. We took a long, hard look at the experience in other parts of the world—not only their experience in terms of how they sited and their setback requirements with respect to wind turbines, for example, but at any medical evidence or knowledge that might have been developed in connection with wind turbines. We have come to the conclusion that there is nothing that indicates that—given what we have done and the setback requirements we've put in place, which are the most aggressive in North America and some of the most aggressive in the world.

What we have done, out of a sense of responsibility, is we're also funding ongoing research. We are funding a new research chair to take a look at these things so that we can begin to collect, on our own, data specific to Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: When the Premier is doing all that deep studying perhaps he should be looking at where France and Germany are actually ramping back their wind turbine developments because they are finding that there are issues with it.

So far, 50 municipalities in Ontario have passed resolutions asking the provincial government to return the planning power for wind energy to them. Last week, I introduced a private member's bill, Bill 29, that would do just that. The Minister of Energy and Infrastructure has already been quoted in the newspaper that he will not be supporting my bill. Premier, will you be instructing your Liberal caucus to vote against my bill or will you allow them to vote on behalf of their communities and return planning power for wind energy projects back to municipalities?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: It's up to members to make up their own minds when it comes to private members' issues. But what I can say is that while I'm very confident of the safety standards that we're putting in place with respect to how and where we put up our wind turbines, I'm also—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): There have been a number of personal attacks that aren't directed at government policy but are directed at individual members, coming from this corner back here. I'd just ask members to be more conscious of not directing a personal attack at a member. It's one thing to do it to a policy.

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: The other thing that is important to keep in mind here is that while we continue to have a growing demand and certainly over the longer term a growing demand for more energy in Ontario, we've got to come to grips with one of the best sources of that energy. We have made a decision as a government to eliminate coal-fired generation. There is no doubt whatsoever about the harm and dangers associated with coal-fired generation. On the other hand, harnessing the

power of the wind and harnessing the power of the sun are important new initiatives and new opportunities that create jobs and help provide us with electricity that we are going to need in the future.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Minister of Consumer Services. Lakeport Brewery was a local success story, providing good jobs for more than 140 Hamiltonians. Labatt purchased the brewery and is now shutting it down, killing these good jobs just to eliminate competition. Now they're removing all equipment from the plant and are refusing to sell to brewers who would keep the plant running. Will the minister use the powers of her office to investigate Labatt's attempts to establish a monopoly and kill off good jobs in Hamilton?

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: Do you really want to answer this? To the Minister of Economic Development.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: We do appreciate the question. The member from Hamilton Mountain has been relentless in support of the Hamilton community and this issue around Lakeport is not lost on the member from Hamilton Mountain.

Let's just be clear about this. We understand what the role of government can be, and what it is today in Ontario is to make it one of the best and most competitive environments for businesses to flourish in. We understand that Labatt has made a change—they've actually made a purchase—and as an entity, an incorporation, they do have a right to choose their business. We know that. We know that we can't run rampant over that right that they have.

What we do know is that in conversations with Hamilton for the last seven years, we have worked diligently for Hamilton to have the kind of infrastructure and skilled trades in its workforce to be a very attractive part of Ontario. We will continue to do that, whether it's at Lakeport or whatever facility that may—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: I don't know why that minister is answering for the other minister, but anyway—

Labatt has tried to engage the city of Hamilton in their efforts to eliminate competition. They've offered the city \$2 million on the condition that Lakeport not—I repeat, not—be sold to any other beer maker. There are 143 skilled people who make good beer and there are people out there who want to buy that beer, but that would cut into the profits of the Premier's friends at Labatt. What is this minister or the other minister going to do to protect consumers from Labatt's attempting to establish a monopoly and killing good jobs in Hamilton?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: Just for the record, our Premier is a big fan of the microbreweries, especially those in Ontario—and they are very good.

Let me say this: The people in Hamilton must be concerned. They are part of Ontario, which has suffered greatly in this last world recession. We are doing every-

thing we can to help Hamilton recover. When we have episodes like this with Labatt, which has a right to make a purchase of another business—and they did do that—we want to work with Hamilton. We believe that if that site can be useful to another manufacturer or another business opportunity in that facility, we want to play a role in helping to facilitate that. And just for the record, that is exactly the role that my ministry is playing. That is exactly the role that we have played in the past, and we will do so again, with or without the help of the members in opposition, who so far have been completely unhelpful when it comes to—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

DOCTORS

Mr. Glen R. Murray: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Many of my constituents have worried about access to family physicians in Ontario. They want good-quality care for their loved ones, close to where they live and where they need it. I understand that the College of Physicians and Surgeons releases an annual report about its registration statistics each year. They track the total number of licences issued. With the increase in chronic diseases over the years, it is important that these numbers go up so that Ontarians have an adequate supply of family doctors to treat their conditions. Could the minister please update this House on the results of the physicians' report?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm very pleased to talk about some of the highlights from the CPSO's report. In 2009, the CPSO issued over 3,600 licences in Ontario. That includes medical students and doctors who are prepared to practise. This is the highest-ever total. In fact, it's 1,000 more than in 2004 and 2,000 more than in 1997. For the independent practice category—those are the doctors who can go out and set up their own practice—1,200 licences were issued, the highest number since 1985.

1130

This government is committed to improving access to health care. That's why we've got 2,300 more doctors practising medicine today than in 2003. The numbers speak for themselves: 900,000 more Ontarians have access to primary care today—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Glen R. Murray: I think we have as many physicians in my constituency as we have pharmacies. This will reserve for them access to primary care as an important issue for our government.

Another area of importance to my constituents is international medical graduates. The constituents in my riding of Toronto Centre come from a wide variety of cultural backgrounds. Several have medical degrees from other countries and are looking to start work as physicians in Ontario.

I understand that the post-graduate return of service program opens the door to international medical graduates who agree to practise for five years in any Ontario community except the Toronto and Ottawa areas, in exchange for post-graduate training opportunities.

My constituents want to know if any of the government's initiatives are actually resulting in rising numbers of IMGs. Can the minister please tell this House about the number of IMGs in Ontario?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We are absolutely committed to giving international medical graduates the opportunity to put those valuable skills to work right here in Ontario.

According to the CPSO's report, the number of IMGs who have received independent practice certificates has more than doubled, from 169 in 2003 to 345 in 2009. They come from all over the world—105 different countries. The top countries are India, Pakistan, Egypt, the United Kingdom, Iran, Ireland, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Romania and Russia.

These doctors, new to Ontario, are putting their skills to work. They're creating a much richer environment for all Ontarians. We're building on the success, and we're committed to adding 100 more spots for medical students going forward. We're going to continue working with physicians and communities to improve access to care in this province.

CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. We have recently learned about three London area group homes run by the London children's aid society who will be forced to close their doors. This is following three other CAS group homes in London that have already closed their doors.

Minister, what is your plan to serve these children who are battling addictions, and who have special needs and mental health challenges?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'm pleased to have a chance to talk about all the work that's being done across the province to better support kids and their families and to find a pathway to ensure that these services will be available in the long term.

With respect to the efforts made by children's aid societies, we've been working very closely with children's aid societies across the province to help them look at the services they are providing in their communities. In fact, I've had the opportunity on more than one occasion to speak to the board and the executive director of the London CAS, who I know is doing great work to really take a hard look at the services that are being provided to youth.

There are many innovations taking place across the province. We look to working with communities, taking up the leadership from those communities and taking their advice on how to deliver services in every community across the province, including in London.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: We all know that children's aid societies across Ontario are doing great work, but what you are doing by forcing the London CAS to close the doors of their three group homes is putting their hands behind their backs.

A CAS official has said that these children have many needs and cannot be placed in foster home environments. CAS workers in London have already admitted that the children who were forced out of the last group home closures have struggled and have been bounced from foster home to foster home since those closures. Now, 18 more children will be forced into that same uncertainty.

Minister, how can you justify this group home closure to the families and children in London when the sunshine list in your ministry went up by 44%?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I can tell you that one other thing that went up is the budget of the London CAS. It went up by \$1.1 million when we released additional funding to stabilize that children's aid society. In fact, the budget of the London CAS has gone up 34.9% since 2003.

We continue to invest in children in CASs across the province. These children will continue to be served in their communities. The query, the innovation that is being examined in London, is what is the methodology? How will we serve these children, and who will be the deliverer of that service?

I'm proud of the work that the London CAS is doing. We continue to invest in that CAS. We look to stabilize it, and then we look toward the conversation that we're having across the province with our commissioners to find a new pathway forward for the service of children in this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

ANTI-SMOKING PROGRAMS

M^{me} France G  linas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Promotion de la sant  .

Yesterday, the Ontario Medical Association released a new study on the state of smoking in Ontario. The results were qualified as disappointing. There are more smokers today than there were 40 years ago. The cost to the health care system is \$1.6 billion, the economic cost is \$6.1 billion, and there are 13,000 deaths annually.

They made four valid recommendations. Does the minister support the Ontario Medical Association's recommendations? Will her ministry be implementing this report?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: I'm certainly pleased to be able to discuss this issue in the Legislature. It's an important issue for me, the government of Ontario and for the people of the province.

We thank the OMA for their work on highlighting the dangers of smoking. We are currently reviewing the report, and we remain committed to the smoke-free Ontario strategy, which is one of the most comprehensive strategies to attack tobacco in North America.

Since 2003, our government has provided approximately \$300 million toward the smoke-free Ontario strategy. In 2009-10, our funding for smoke-free Ontario is over 400% higher than in 2003.

We have invested \$29 million in smoking cessation programs, training and research initiatives—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: One of the key recommendations is focused on contraband tobacco. The OMA is only one of many, many agencies that have come to you and said that the government has to show progress on contraband. There are serious solutions that have been put forward, put to your government, but the government keeps avoiding the issue of contraband tobacco.

How much longer is this government prepared to stand by as lives are taken away and health care dollars are sacrificed to an insufficient tobacco control strategy and a lack of action on contraband?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: I'll refer the supplementary to the Minister of Revenue.

Hon. John Wilkinson: I thank the member for the question.

We take the issue of contraband tobacco very seriously. A person who manufactures, sells or purchases contraband tobacco is stealing from their neighbours by not paying their taxes. It forces those of us who are law-abiding to pay more.

I can tell you that we take the issue seriously, and we are receiving results. I can tell you that convictions under the Tobacco Tax Act have more than tripled in the last year. I can tell you that seizures of illegal cigarettes have been increasing by more than 50% year over year as we work with our partners to prevent the scourge of contraband tobacco. I can also tell you that the penalties that people have been paying for breaking the law have now exceeded some \$14.2 million.

But I say to the member that we take the recommendations from the Ontario Medical Association, and so many other people who have supported our vision of a smoke-free Ontario, very seriously. We'll continue to work—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. The time for question period has ended.

DEFERRED VOTES

TIME ALLOCATION

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We have a deferred vote on a motion for allocation of time on Bill 16.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1139 to 1144.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Milloy has moved government notice of motion number 4. All those in favour will please rise one at a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Aggelonitis, Sophia
Albanese, Laura
Arthurs, Wayne
Balkissoon, Bas
Bartolucci, Rick
Bentley, Christopher
Best, Margaret
Bradley, James J.
Brotan, Laurel C.
Brown, Michael A.
Brownell, Jim
Cansfield, Donna H.
Carroll, Aileen
Chan, Michael
Colle, Mike
Crozier, Bruce
Dombrowsky, Leona
Duncan, Dwight

Fonseca, Peter
Gerretsen, John
Gravelle, Michael
Hoskins, Eric
Hoy, Pat
Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Johnson, Rick
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Leal, Jeff
Levac, Dave
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McGuinty, Dalton
Meilleur, Madeleine
Milloy, John
Mitchell, Carol
Murray, Glen R.

Naqvi, Yasir
Oraziotti, David
Phillips, Gerry
Pupatello, Sandra
Ramal, Khalil
Rinaldi, Lou
Ruprecht, Tony
Sandals, Liz
Smith, Monique
Sorbara, Greg
Sousa, Charles
Takhar, Harinder S.
Van Bommel, Maria
Wilkinson, John
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): All those opposed?

Nays

Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Barrett, Toby
Chudleigh, Ted
Clark, Steve
DiNovo, Cheri
Dunlop, Garfield
Elliott, Christine
Gélinas, France
Hampton, Howard

Hardeman, Ernie
Hillier, Randy
Hudak, Tim
Jones, Sylvia
MacLeod, Lisa
Marchese, Rosario
Martiniuk, Gerry
Miller, Norm
Munro, Julia
Murdoch, Bill

O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Prue, Michael
Savoline, Joyce
Shurman, Peter
Wilson, Jim
Witmer, Elizabeth
Yakubski, John

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 52; the nays are 28.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): There being no further deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1147 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

M^{me} France Gélinas: Il me fait extrêmement plaisir de vous dire que j'ai de la visite de Nickel Belt. Cela n'arrive pas souvent, mais ça me fait très plaisir.

Je commence avec M^{me} Gisèle Chrétien, qui est récipiendaire de l'Ordre de la Pléiade. Elle est ici avec son mari, André, qui l'accompagne. J'ai également M. Denis Hubert-Dutrisac qui est ici, accompagné de sa femme, Francine. J'ai aussi Renée Champagne et son époux Gary qui sont ici. Ça me fait extrêmement plaisir de les accueillir à Queen's Park.

Mr. Kim Craiton: I'm exceptionally pleased to introduce two special guests this afternoon: the sons of one of our elite members of Parliament, Vince Kerrio Sr., who was MPP for my riding of Niagara Falls for 15 years. I'm pleased to introduce Michael Kerrio and Vince Kerrio Jr.

Shortly after 3 o'clock today, all three parties in the House will have a special tribute to remember Vince Kerrio, who passed away last year.

Mr. John O'Toole: With your indulgence, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce Richard Smith, as well as Peter Meraw, two pharmacists from Minden, Ontario. More

interestingly, they grew up on the same street and my wife taught them in grade 1. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I would like to welcome four representatives from the Trillium Gift of Life Network: Sandra Fawcett, Aroon Maathoor, Versha Prakaash and Janet MacLean. I know that I speak for all members when I say thank you for the very important work they do for organ and tissue donation awareness in Ontario.

Mr. Steve Clark: Very soon, I'll have three people from my riding in attendance: Katherine Christensen, executive director of Thousand Islands Accommodation Partners; Anne-Marie Forcier, executive director of the Rideau Heritage Route; and Kim Barr, tourism manager for the Brockville and District Chamber of Commerce.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Introduction of visitors.

Mr. Frank Klees: Here, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Are you trying to put me on?

Mr. Frank Klees: I would like to introduce a visitor.

It's my pleasure to introduce Mr. Vincenzo Ruso, who is just finishing his studies to become a lawyer and expressed to me today that he really would like to spend the rest of his career in public life, preferably in this place.

So, I want to say to members here: If you need someone with a good education, you're looking at the man right now. My advice to him is that it's even okay to work for a member of the Liberal government, as long as you don't lose your principles while you're doing it.

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde: Il me fait plaisir de souhaiter la bienvenue aux conjoints et aux conjointes, aux amis et aux enfants de nos récipiendaires de l'Ordre de la Pléiade qui vont être honorés cet après-midi. Bienvenue ici même à Queen's Park.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I know this has been covered a bit, but I will add to the introductions.

We have with us in the Speaker's gallery today a group of Ontarians who have been selected by an all-party panel of members to receive the internationally recognized medal of Francophonie: l'Ordre de la Pléiade. These individuals are being recognized for their outstanding contributions to French-speaking communities in the province.

The recipients are M^{me} Gisèle Chrétien, M. Denis Hubert-Dutrisac, M. Gilles LeVasseur, M. Guy Mignault, M. Marius Ouellette, M^{me} Lise Routhier Boudreau, M^{me} Gisèle Séguin.

Please join me in welcoming these honoured guests to Queen's Park.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

BOTTLE RECYCLING

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Members' statements. The member for—

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Dufferin—Caledon.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): — Dufferin—Caledon. I always have trouble with that, and I apologize.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Dufferin—Caledon.

I'm pleased to rise today to congratulate Ice River Springs in my riding of Dufferin—Caledon for their commitment to opening a plastics recycling plant in the town of Shelburne.

Recycling PET, the resin used to make water bottles and other plastics into food-grade plastics, is a very innovative process. Ice River Springs will be the first bottled water company in North America to manufacture resin for its own use.

The Shelburne facility will take bales of used plastic from municipal recycling projects and recycle it into food-grade plastic. The material will then be sent to the company's main facility in Feversham and converted into bottles.

Currently, resin to make water bottles is shipped in from the United States. This new Shelburne plant will eliminate their need to purchase resin, and will produce enough resin to supply other food companies across Ontario. This will result in a plastic water bottle that is made of 100% recycled PET with the lowest weight of plastic required, the lightest cap and the smallest label.

Once the plant is fully operational, Ice River Springs is expected to create 60 new full-time jobs. The company has pledged to hire and train local residents to fill the positions.

The plant opening in July will prove not only to be good for the environment but good for the economy. Ice River Springs is investing \$15 million to open their plant in Shelburne. I want to thank owners Jamie and Sandy Gott for their commitment to preserving the environment and creating jobs at their newest business in Shelburne.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you to the member from Dufferin—Caledon.

EVENT IN CHATHAM—KENT—ESSEX

Mr. Pat Hoy: Last Saturday, I attended the Blenheim BIA's and the chamber of commerce's annual dinner to honour and celebrate the contributions and successes of our community's outstanding individuals and businesses.

Congratulations to the award winners in all categories. They are the Thibert Farm, Mill and Bakery, agricultural award; White Wolf Marketing, entrepreneur award; DPM Insurance Group, heritage award; Katharine Smyth, good neighbour award; CarQuest, retail award; Til-Mech Enterprises, industry award; Tilbury Lions Club, service club award; and Christopher Beausoleil, youth involvement award.

The citizen of the year award went to Bob Thibert. Bob served as a volunteer firefighter for 35 years and was the Tilbury fire chief. Sadly, he passed away in December 2009 at the age of 55 from a heart attack while directing the response to a fire.

1510

Chief Thibert had a wealth of knowledge and skill. His peers described him as being masterful at the scene of an emergency. His volunteer activities included everything from fire-prevention education to service clubs. One year, he worked 24-7 with a team from his station to receive donations for a family who lost their home in a fire near Christmastime. He was a caring leader, role model and generous person.

These award winners were being recognized for their exemplary leadership, vision and generosity of spirit. They are an inspiration for others to also get involved.

TAXATION

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yesterday, I introduced my private member's bill, now numbered Bill 40, which will be debated in this Legislature on May 6. This is not the first time I have made an attempt on this. This is a gas-tax fairness bill. It is at least the fourth time that I've introduced it. It is also a position that our leader Tim Hudak supports, and he has made it officially part of our party policy.

It is an issue of fundamental fairness. The federal government recognizes it; why won't the provincial government and the members opposite do the same? The federal government recognizes that gas tax that is paid by each and every person purchasing gas should be shared with the communities in which they live. That's what this bill would ensure: that all communities, not just those with a public transportation system, would share in the revenue from gas taxes in this province.

Unfortunately, the McGuinty government has a different view of rural Ontario. We're seeing it again with this attack on rural pharmacists, where rural pharmacists who provide front-line health care to people all across Ontario are under attack by this government because they don't recognize the tremendous service that they provide to people in the communities. I'm asking for fairness on that; I'm asking for rural members in this House to support my gas tax bill on May 6.

Interruption.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Our visitors are welcome to the Legislature. You're welcome to watch the proceedings, but you aren't allowed to participate. Any other outburst like that and I may have to reconsider having you as our guests in the gallery.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: But you can always come back.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I don't need your help. I can handle it.

SAULT COLLEGE

Mr. David Oraziatti: I'm pleased today to comment on the progress we're making at Sault College in my riding of Sault Ste. Marie. Recently, our government provided over \$2.6 million in infrastructure and equipment funding for Sault College. This announcement was comprised of contributions through the Northern Ontario

Heritage Fund Corp. and the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. The funding will be used for capital development costs associated with completing phase 1 of the campus redevelopment project. There will also be upgrades to teaching equipment and machinery as well as increased resources to help accommodate the growing enrolment at Sault College and Algoma University.

Investing in new infrastructure and improving teaching equipment and facilities helps our schools increase enrolment and prepares our students for the next generation of jobs. Sault College and Algoma University are also receiving additional combined funding under the Open Ontario plan, which is helping to build a highly skilled and educated workforce. Enrolment at Sault College is expected to grow by 700 students in the fall of 2011.

I want to congratulate, on behalf of our community, board chair Ben Pascuzzi for his dedication and commitment to Sault College, and also recognize the tremendous efforts of president Ron Common, who said that "as a result of this generous contribution, we can look forward to continued growth and success. The funds will also ensure that Sault College students continue to train on the most modern resources and equipment available, thus making our graduates even more desirable in the workforce."

Our government recognizes that by investing in post-secondary education we're also strengthening our economy by creating local jobs and ensuring that students can learn in the most modern, state-of-the-art facilities.

THOUSAND ISLANDS ACCOMMODATION PARTNERS

Mr. Steve Clark: The Thousand Islands Accommodation Partners is an innovative group that was born of local business men and women to market the world-famous Thousand Islands region, located in my riding. Their primary source of funds to showcase this area is by a destination marketing fee. This fee is an add-on to room rates at many of our local hotels and included on tickets at the Thousand Islands Playhouse and on tours by the Gananoque Boat Lines. The boat lines have 250,000 people go through their turnstiles each season, and the playhouse itself has over 50,000 visits per season.

The destination marketing fee, or DMF, is currently 3% and provides \$300,000 to TIAP for use in the community for local events, to help market worthwhile initiatives that include jazz in the Thousand Islands, Ribfest, the Chalk Art Festival, and also the War of 1812 celebration's improvements at Joel Stone Park.

The partnership's local success is now in jeopardy. The Ministry of Tourism has told Gananoque it can no longer charge a DMF. While the government will continue to give the town what it has raised through the DMF for the next two years, it excludes the almost one third contributed by the boat line and theatre because they are attractions and not accommodations. This

government is meddling with a proven successful tourism partnership.

Chair Cliff Edwards and his committee should be commended for their efforts in bringing people to the Thousand Islands. I call on the Minister of Tourism to allow the partners to continue to collect money under the existing DMF model.

LABOUR DISPUTE

M^{me} France G  linas: The labour dispute between Vale Inco and USW 6500 in Sudbury and USW 6200 in Port Colborne has now dragged on for over nine months, nine days and 15 hours. Over 3,000 people are out walking the picket lines, and I've got to say that you can see the effect of the strike everywhere in Nickel Belt. People, families and small businesses are all being hurt financially.

People in Sudbury are also talking about the escalating tension in the labour dispute ever since Vale Inco announced that they will resume full production by using replacement workers. Meanwhile, the McGuinty government is standing by and staying away from the entire situation. When business asked for help, the government listened. But when the workers ask for help, the government ignores them.

Next Thursday, I will be reintroducing a bill that would ban replacement workers in this province. It used to be the law in Ontario. Labour disputes were settled quicker and it reduced tensions on the picket line. But the Harris government did away with the anti-scab labour laws.

When we voted last session on the exact same bill, I was defeated by the Liberal government.

Next Thursday at about 1:15, members of this Legislature will have a chance to vote on the bill in first reading. I hope this time you will listen to the workers. You have an opportunity to help people throughout Ontario—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you.

JER'S VISION

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I'm very pleased to rise today to talk about Jer's Vision: Canada's Youth Diversity Initiative, a really great organization based in my riding of Ottawa Centre that I'm proud to support.

Last Wednesday, April 14, you may remember that many members in this House wore articles of pink for the International Day of Pink to support diversity in our schools and communities. The first Day of Pink was a grassroots demonstration of support for diversity and to stop discrimination, bullying and homophobia that had befallen a student in Nova Scotia. Jer's Vision was instrumental in taking this local grassroots opposition to discrimination and turning it into an international day of action to support diversity and oppose hatred.

I was pleased to offer my support last Wednesday in Ottawa at the fifth-anniversary gala for Jer's Vision and

the Day of Pink. At that gala, the organization also honoured Elder William Commanda for his work in creating a harmonious community in Ottawa.

The Day of Pink is but one example of how Jer's Vision has succeeded tremendously in their first five years. They are clearly succeeding because not only are they an organization of compassion, openness and awareness, but of purpose. Jer's Vision is Canada's national organization to support and encourage the work of youth to address discrimination in their schools and communities. Today, Jer's Vision runs over 40 initiatives using the talents of 800 volunteers and serving 60,000 people annually.

My thanks and best wishes go out to founder Jeremy Dias for his tremendous and dedicated work, and to the many volunteers and supporters who make this good work possible.

GEORGE JEFFREY CHILDREN'S CENTRE

Mr. Bill Mauro: I'm fortunate to have within my riding the George Jeffrey Children's Centre. The centre, funded by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, offers programs and services that help to meet the physical, developmental and social needs of children of all ages and abilities in northwestern Ontario.

1520

On December 12, 2008, which was the centre's 60th anniversary, they held the official grand opening of their spectacular newly constructed facility. This 34,000-square-foot centre was an \$11-million project, and I'm very proud to say that our government contributed roughly \$7.3 million toward the construction of this spectacular facility. I want to congratulate CEO Eiji Tsubouchi; Bob Speer, the president of the board; and all of the staff and board members for their efforts related to the fundraising and building campaign.

In addition to the roughly \$7.3 million for the new building, our government also contributed approximately \$500,000 toward the base budget of this centre. And just last month, in our budget, we announced another increase into the operating budget for children's centres in Ontario. For the centre in my riding, this recent announcement was around \$280,000 annually, making the overall increased operating funding for the centre almost \$800,000 higher every year than it was just a few short years ago. The George Jeffrey Children's Centre is now extremely well positioned to serve the needs of the children of northwestern Ontario for decades to come.

I want to thank the community of Thunder Bay and northwestern Ontario for their support of the new building, and the staff and the board of directors for their commitment to the children of northwestern Ontario.

JACK YEILDING

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Earlier today, I had the pleasure of introducing seven-year-old Jack Yeilding to

the Ontario Legislature, and he received a standing ovation. For those of you who don't know, Jack's life has been an incredible example of courage and overcoming obstacles.

Before he turned one, Jack started having seizures, and he was diagnosed with intractable epilepsy, an illness that will not respond to medication. He has suffered literally thousands of seizures, and recently underwent three very risky brain surgeries in order to stop them. Despite the medical challenges, Jack has become a community hero for his bravery, his strength and his vision of a world where children help other children.

In 2007, Jack began hosting an annual lemonade stand at his home in Oakville to raise funds for the SickKids Foundation. In three years, his stand has already raised more than \$150,000, and it grows every year. It has become a full-fledged street festival with entertainment, food, prizes and special guests.

Jack has been dubbed Canada's youngest philanthropist by Maclean's magazine. He's a patient ambassador for Sick Kids and one of the world's Huggable Heroes.

In my community, Jack's leadership, dedication and bravery make him an inspiration to us all. I'd like to thank young Jack for visiting us today, for his commitment, even at his young age, to improving the lives of others.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

DEFIBRILLATOR ACCESS ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR L'ACCÈS AUX DÉFIBRILLATEURS

Mr. McMeekin moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 41, An Act to provide for defibrillators in premises accessed by members of the public / Projet de loi 41, Loi prévoyant la présence de défibrillateurs dans les lieux accessibles au public.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: Each year approximately 7,000 Ontarians will experience cardiac arrest. Up to 85% of cardiac arrests occur at home and in public places. When used with CPR in the first few minutes after a cardiac arrest, defibrillation can improve cardiac arrest survival rates by more than 50%.

Premises such as schools, fitness centres and hockey arenas are prime targets for the placement of automated external defibrillators. Ensuring that automated external defibrillators are available to members of the public may prevent many tragedies from occurring.

VINCE KERRIO

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I believe we have unanimous consent that up to five minutes be allotted to each party to speak in remembrance of the late Vince Kerrio.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

The member from Niagara Falls.

Mr. Kim Craiton: I'll be sharing my time with the member from St. Catharines.

Today we're here to pay tribute to a great member of provincial Parliament for the riding of Niagara Falls who passed away, sadly, last year, Vince Kerrio Sr. I'm pleased that his two sons, Vince Jr. and Mike, are here in attendance and that his lovely wife, Rose, is watching on TV. Rose, we love you. I'm pleased to wish her well.

Vince Kerrio was a giant of a man who was elected in five consecutive elections to serve this Parliament for 15 fabulous years. He increased his margin of victory each and every election. He was politically and personally very popular. He had a friendly style that served him both at home and here in the House.

So it is no wonder, when I was first asked to represent the great riding of Niagara Falls, that the first person that I turned to for advice and guidance was Vince Kerrio Sr., my mentor. I asked him why he was so successful. He had a very simple explanation. He said, "You work hard, you campaign even harder, you be a friend to all, and you don't ever forget who elected you in the first place"—good words that continually challenged and informed me, and I never forgot those for the elections that I have run through as a provincial member of Parliament. Vince and Rose became very close to me as family and friends, and more importantly, I learned to rely on Vince Kerrio's wise advice and accurate political information that he shared with me.

Vince served this province, and I'm proud to say it, well as a member, and then as the Minister of Natural Resources and later as the Minister of Energy. He was a friend to the environment and an avid sportsman. Vince Kerrio prohibited mining in Ontario provincial parks, prohibited the exportation of water, restocked fish back into our depleted lakes and traded away some of Ontario's moose to Minnesota to introduce wild turkeys back into our province. He had so much energy that he was appointed to head the ministry and became a powerful advocate for the third Beck tunnel.

On a personal note, Vince was an amazing man. He wanted to fly, so he built his own plane. He wanted to sail, so he built his own boat. He wanted to be an engineer, so he built his own railway—a perfect model for his children. He put his skills together, I am told, by ensuring that his children were successful at the soapbox derby in Niagara. He wanted to be a politician, so he put together a truly awesome and stronger election campaign with every election.

Vince returned to Niagara with great gusto. He wanted to help Niagara grow into a booming industry, so he became a great entrepreneur and a hotelier.

While Vince no longer walks these halls, I expect that one day one of his sons will. In the meantime, he will be remembered by all of us on all sides of the House as one who served so well in Niagara.

As Vince would always say to me—every time I saw him, he'd start out by saying, "Brother Craiton, are you

doing good for the province of Ontario? I want to know.” That’s the way he greeted me, and I’ll always remember him that way.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from St. Catharines.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I’m pleased to share the time with my colleague from Niagara Falls in paying tribute to a person who was a very close personal friend to me, and not just to me but to so many members in the Ontario Legislature who served during the time he did.

An interesting fact, in looking at the demographics of Ontario: Vince was the first Italian-Canadian cabinet minister in the history of the province of Ontario, which is rather fascinating. Today we see a much different complexion to Ontario than we would have then in terms of demographics.

Vince brought a different approach to it. He brought a very businesslike approach to politics. He was a small business person, although I would characterize it as a medium-sized business, and always lectured us on the fact that small business people actually had to have a sharp pencil. They couldn’t pass it on in higher prices. They couldn’t pass it on in the fact that they were large operations. They had to make a profit. Vince approached so many of the challenges that we have to meet as a province in that way.

He was a perfect natural resources minister because he was actually an outdoors person. He actually understood it and he was very popular with the crowd who fished and hunted, because Vince did that as well.

He was also a good energy minister because he understood the importance of small water projects and the role they could play in the future of the province. He was very much a conservationist, very dedicated to the city of Niagara Falls, very dedicated to his family. Vince Jr. is here today and Mike. Of course, he and his wife, Rose, were very close.

You can tell when you go to someone’s funeral, and see who’s at the funeral, just how popular and respected that person was. There were people of all political affiliations there. There were people who knew him locally, the local folks who were his personal friends and friends of the family, but there were also people from all across the province who paid tribute to Vince Kerrio.

The city of Niagara Falls, the regional municipality of Niagara and the province of Ontario are all better places because Vince Kerrio served in this House.

1530

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Tim Hudak: It is an honour to rise today and to pay tribute to Vince Kerrio, whose contributions to public life touched so many here at Queen’s Park and in my home area of Niagara and across our great province. Also, my best to Vince Jr. and Mike, and Rose watching from home today.

Coming from Niagara, and just up river from where Vince lived, we all knew the political legend of Vince Kerrio. Being a fan of politics, I followed his career

closely and with admiration, and then when I was elected myself, I had the unique benefit of getting to know Vince, even though we came from different parties, and particularly when I had the honour of serving as the tourism minister or consumer minister, benefiting from his trusted advice and good counsel, just as Kim indicated a few minutes ago.

You could always say that Vince’s impression in Niagara Falls was carved in stone, or at least the concrete sidewalk slabs that bear the Kerrio-Germano construction company stamp to this day. But it’s not just the sidewalks that pay reverence to Vince each and every day. He was an entrepreneur in the tourism and hotel business during some tough times and long before the casinos and the big hotels came to town. He was a trailblazer in the tourism industry and invested his resources, personal time and money in the community he believed in, both in public life and private business alike.

Like all of us from down on the Niagara River, Vince knew the breathtaking beauty of the Falls and that the Niagara Peninsula would make it as a premier tourism destination the world over. He was right, and he was justifiably proud of it.

Something else he should be proud of: His company was started by his Italian immigrant father, thrived under his leadership and today is run by his two sons, Mike and Vince.

In some ways, Vince and I shared a bit of a kinship ourselves. Much like Vince, I was first elected to a Niagara riding, despite unfavourable odds. Vince’s reputation, conduct and accomplishments helped me understand that dedication to your community was the most important part of representing it. A big part of that job is to sell our province and local communities, and Vince was dedicated to Niagara in the sense of where he lived and where he came from. Recognizing his heritage, his company hired thousands of Italian immigrants between the 1950s and 1970s.

When Vince Kerrio became the Minister of Energy and Minister of Natural Resources under David Peterson, he bore the distinction, as my colleague Minister Bradley just said, of being the first Italian-Canadian named to the Ontario cabinet, an achievement that his family and the Italian-Canadian community are rightfully proud of to this very day.

His work in Ontario is still evident in 2010. Vince had a very admirable dedication to conservation. His love of fishing and hunting led him, as the MNR minister, to bring fishing licences into the province of Ontario. He was dedicated to replenishing our wildlife throughout our province. He took a tough stand and fought to maintain our province’s water supply and protect the beauty of Ontario’s provincial parks.

Back home and as energy minister, he was a strong proponent of the important value of hydroelectricity, the mighty cataract in his home riding, small projects across the province, and he was a ceaseless champion of the idea of Beck 3, which would bring a third generating station on the Niagara River.

We all know that Vince left politics after the 1990 election, but the respect people had for the work Vince Kerrio did transcended political lines. A rarity in politics: a statesman respected on all sides of the House. To that end, people who faced off from Vince in this Legislature during question period—Premier Mike Harris counted him as a good friend and counsel. I know that Premier Bill Davis was at Vince Kerrio's prayer service last October.

The family he left behind still live in Niagara Falls. His son Vince has followed his father's footsteps into public life, where he serves as a Niagara Falls councillor. On behalf of the community of Niagara Falls and the people who meant so much to Vince Kerrio and my constituents in Niagara West—Glanbrook, I am sorry for their loss and our loss.

As a member of this Legislature, let me repeat the words from the tribute Vince once gave to another former legendary member from Niagara Falls, George Bukator, following Mr. Bukator's passing in 1987. Vince said of Mr. Bukator, "In my city, his name is also synonymous with dedication to the good of our community." Far be it from me to try and say it any better than you did, Vince, but in Niagara Falls, the name Vince Kerrio holds that same dedication, that same reputation: dedication to the community and dedication to our great province.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Parkdale—High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's an honour and a privilege to rise for the New Democratic Party and our leader, Andrea Horwath, and to offer condolences and prayers to the family of Vince Kerrio. I wasn't here when Vince was. I wasn't elected at that time. I didn't know him personally. But, like him, in a sense, I'm the daughter of an Italian immigrant, and I remember what my father went through.

I want to particularly focus on Vince as a politician here and Vince as the first Italian cabinet minister in the province of Ontario because, through the stories of my father, I remember very well what it was like to be an Italian in Vince's generation. My father talked about walking in the back door; not being allowed in the front door of various clubs that will go unnamed in the city as a semi-pro boxer. I remember the difficult time my father had dealing with racism directed at the Italian community in this province. I remember my father speaking about all of that, and it giving him a perspective of a new immigrant, particularly a new immigrant in business and all the hurdles that it took to be successful, to make an impact. So in a sense, like all the offspring of Italian immigrants, I in a way knew Vince. I knew of many Vinces in my upbringing.

I particularly pay homage to the sons, to Vince and to Mike, who carry on the family tradition, obviously. To you as well, a great thank you from the province of Ontario and from the New Democratic Party. Thank you because, also as a politician, I know what you've lived with growing up. I know that your father probably wasn't around for some of the events in your life the way you

would have wanted him to be, and I know he wasn't around in those events because he was here, because he was serving the people of Ontario.

When I was first elected four years ago, I had no idea of the workload of this position, and like many Ontarians I had an image of politicians and the role of our MPPs that was absolutely off the mark. In fact, I know your father also because of the work that we do here. We work hard and we work long hours, all of us, all political parties do, particularly cabinet ministers, whose day really never ends. And you know this. You know this as his family, and you know this because you shared him with us. You, in a sense, did a wonderful service to the people of Ontario, not only the people of Niagara Falls but all the people of Ontario, in sharing your father with us.

Rose, who's watching at home: Thank you, Rose, because my husband would ring with your experience of what it's like to be married to somebody who plays this role here, of the nights that you don't see them, the events you go to solo because they're not there. Your family has gifted us with all of that. Thank you so much for that.

1540

Really, just a hymn, if this is one in some small way, to all of those who have served this Legislature, because it's too often said that we are at partisan war here and there's too little said that, in fact, we share a great tradition—all parties do; everyone here does—and that is the tradition of full-time service to the people in our constituencies and the people across Ontario.

This is an honourable profession. You shared your father with the people of Ontario in an honourable profession, one of the most honourable professions. Thank you for doing that.

Quite frankly, if you are planning—well, you're already serving in a sense in a political role. We hope to see you here one day perhaps, or perhaps in Ottawa. Who knows? What I would suggest is that, then, you truly carry on one of the most honourable professions for anybody to do and for anybody to perform.

Thank you also for being the family of, again, the first Italian cabinet minister. That's saying a great deal—Italian-Canadian cabinet minister—particularly because of the times in which Vince lived.

Again, condolences, prayers, a hymn to your family and a thank you for sharing your father with us, surely, and for sharing your father with all Ontarians in this noble profession.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On behalf of all members, I offer our condolences to Mrs. Kerrio at home, and to his sons, Vince and Mike, who are joining us today. A copy of the Hansard and a DVD of the proceedings today will be forwarded to your family.

I'd ask that all members and our guests please rise as we observe a moment of silence and tribute to the career of Mr. Vince Kerrio, MPP.

The House observed a moment's silence.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION

Hon. Deborah Matthews: This week, we celebrate National Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Week in Canada. We've provided green ribbons for all MPPs to wear this week to remind Ontarians of the crucial importance of registering their consent to donate organs and tissues for transplantation.

I'm asking MPPs to do more than just wear a ribbon; I'm asking MPPs to register as donors. So pull out your health cards, look on the back and see if you're a donor. If you are a donor, terrific. If not, I'm asking MPPs to visit ServiceOntario to register and ask them to do it today. Giving the gift of life is more important now than ever before.

The need for organ and tissue donations for transplantation continues to be a major concern for many Ontarians. Technological and pharmaceutical advances, an aging population and increasing rates of end-stage organ disease have all created an increased opportunity for organ transplantation.

While Ontario has made solid progress in increasing organ and tissue donations for transplant, with a record-breaking year in 2009, we need more Ontarians to register their consent to donate in order to save and enhance more lives.

Let me share some sobering statistics with you. Currently, there are 1,615 Ontarians waiting for organ transplants, and only 17% of OHIP-eligible Ontarians over 16 years of age are currently registered as willing to donate. We're determined to turn this situation around. That's why we've been working hard to improve the way we collect and share organ and tissue donation-related data.

Our 24/7 look-up program now allows family members of prospective donors to be made aware of their loved one's recorded donation preferences at that very difficult time when they have such an important decision to make.

We're also working to engage faith groups on a three-part strategy: multi-faith services in remembrance of donors, strengthened core activities to engage key faith leaders in communities, and through hospital chaplain training and education.

Pro-donation information has been made available to diverse cultures and different faiths through culturally specific brochures.

Last year, we launched a compelling, engaging and interactive campaign with a new website called recycleme.org, aimed specifically at youth. We've also introduced One Life ... Many Gifts, aimed at raising the level of understanding about organ and tissue donation and transplantation in secondary school classrooms right across the province.

While we've been working hard to improve the situation in Ontario, we know there's more to be done. We want to do all we can to make maximize donations and

increase the number of life-saving organ and tissue transplants. By working hard together, by encouraging people to register their consent to donate, as I have done, and to share their wishes with their families, we can make a huge difference—in fact, a life-saving difference. One donor can save up to eight lives and enhance as many as 75 others.

I urge all members to take the opportunity and remind Ontarians about the urgent need to register their consent to donate their organs or tissue to help people waiting for transplants.

EARTH DAY

Hon. John Gerretsen: This week, we celebrate Earth Week, and tomorrow, April 22, marks Earth Day. While we have reason to celebrate, it is also a good time to reflect on the environmental challenges that we face today.

We've come a long way since that first Earth Day some 40 years ago. As a matter of fact, going on the Earth Day Canada website today, I noticed that there are 174 registered events taking place all across this province and many others besides those that have not been registered.

We simply must go further, and with greater urgency. It will not be our generation who will live with the results of our actions or our failure to act; it will be our children and their children. Our government is deeply committed to ensuring that we leave this province in a better environmental shape than we found it. We know that by fostering a cleaner, more sustainable province, we will help build a stronger, lower-carbon economy.

With our Open Ontario plan, we are making Ontario the place to come to for the environmental solutions and innovations that will create jobs—good jobs—and help transition our economy into one that is more competitive, sustainable, restorative and a better environment for all.

We are showing real leadership and making real progress, and let me just enumerate a number of different areas.

Ontario is the only North American jurisdiction to commit to phasing out coal-fired electricity, the single largest action on greenhouse gas reductions in Canada, by the year 2014.

Our landmark Green Energy and Green Economy Act is making Ontario a North American leader in clean, renewable energy and bringing investment and good jobs to this province.

We also passed a Toxics Reduction Act to prevent sources of pollution at the front end of industrial processes by forcing companies to plan and, as a result, reduce the amount of toxic chemical materials that they use in the manufacturing process.

We've also introduced new or updated air standards for over 50 harmful pollutants over the past five years to help clean the air we breathe.

1550

Our cosmetic pesticides ban, which came into force last year on Earth Day, is one of the toughest in the world

and extremely well received by one and all in this province.

We continue to make protecting our water a key priority. Through the Lake Simcoe protection plan, the Clean Water Act, the Canada-Ontario agreement on the Great Lakes and the source water protection work that is being done by 17 different committees around this province, we are making sure our water is the absolute best in the world.

We are moving forward to make Ontario a global leader in the water technology sector as well. As part of our Open Ontario plan, our proposed new water strategy will protect Ontario's water resources and promote good green-economy jobs. We are also committed to increasing diversion and recycling through a review of the Waste Diversion Act, based on the philosophy of zero waste.

During the past couple of years, we have introduced three new waste diversion programs based on extended producer responsibility—if you make it, you take it at the end of its usefulness in life—for municipal hazardous or special waste, such as paints, antifreeze and batteries; a program for used tires to make sure that they don't end up in our landfill sites; and for waste electronics and electrical devices to make sure that they are recycled, reutilized or made into new products effectively.

This Earth Week, I had the opportunity, along with my colleague the Minister of Education, to visit St. Monica Catholic School and see what the boys and girls in an elementary school setting are doing as part of the EcoSchools program that is growing and growing in the province of Ontario to more and more schools—the imaginative work that these young students are doing to help clean up our environment—and also a young lady I met today, Bridget Graham, who is involved with the Renfrew County Youth for the Environment with an organization called EcoPulse at the high school level. Those are the kinds of young people whom we need in order to help us meet our environmental goals.

To me, there's a great way to celebrate Earth Day: By recognizing what our young people are doing to make the world a cleaner and a healthier place to live. They are, after all, tomorrow's leaders. For their sake, on Earth Day and indeed every day, let's commit to taking actions that sustain our province and our planet. Let's create the kind of legacy we can be proud of to leave to the generations to come.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'm pleased to rise this afternoon on behalf of the PC caucus, along with my colleague the member from Newmarket–Aurora, to respond to the minister's statement concerning National Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Week.

The minister has asked us to, among other things, wear green ribbons in order to remind all Ontarians of the need to register their consent to donate organs and tissue for transplantation. I am pleased to wear it, and I intend to do so the entire week because I, along with the min-

ister, recognize how critically important it is and how many lives can be saved as a result.

While some progress has been made, Ontario and in fact Canada continue to lag behind many other countries in organ donation. This is particularly frustrating for our health care professionals, who are really trying to save lives, and so poignant for the individuals and their families who know that the technology and expertise exists but in many cases can't be utilized. We can and we must do better, and I join the minister in calling on all Ontarians to rise to this very important challenge.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for Newmarket–Aurora.

Mr. Frank Klees: I want to follow up on the minister's request for us to wear ribbons and to register as donors. What I would do is call on the minister to take this one step further and not only direct people to Ontario's service centres, but to do this: Provide, on the ServiceOntario websites, a place where people from across this province can go to register as donors, and that that link is directly linked to the Ontario health insurance plan's registry so that through a person's Ontario health insurance plan number, when they register, it will be immediately registered on that OHIP registry. That does not exist today. We can increase registrations by up to 50% simply by the government taking that one step.

We know that it's going to cost about \$1 million of the government's health care budget to ensure that we can increase the gift of life for so many others in the province of Ontario. Will the minister commit to that today?

EARTH DAY

Mr. Toby Barrett: I welcome the opportunity to recognize Earth Week, or at least the last several days of Earth Week. As we know, Earth Week actually began on the 16th, so I'm not sure why it has taken us until midweek for the Legislature to acknowledge this.

I took the opportunity on Monday to discuss not only Earth Week but also the original Earth Day, April 22. I encourage all members to keep that in mind. That's tomorrow.

As we know, the legacy left by those original Earth Day participants—and that was 40 years ago, in 1970—has seen an environmental awareness campaign grow across the globe. Groups, clubs, companies, even governments organize activities to help clean up the landscape while reminding us of the need for continued work and awareness every day of the year.

In my neck of the woods, the Backus conservation area got a jump on Earth Day last Saturday afternoon with a hands-on experience. People gathered to plant trees. In a roughly one-acre area where corn was growing just a few months ago, small white pine and red oak went into the ground. Our local Long Point Region Conservation Authority purchased that land late last year, and they're going to turn it into a combination forest-land/wetland and link it up to the rest of the well-known Backus woods. Children and parents were also involved in a pond study, catching frogs and other amphibians.

I'd like to read a quote from the local Simcoe Reformer. Janice Robinson, responsible for community relations with LPRCA, said, "Earth Day is about empowering people to make a difference to improving the environment. Small steps can lead to bigger ones and bigger projects."

That's the important part: ensuring that those steps don't stop on this most recently recognized environmental day. It does little good to dedicate oneself to one day or one hour or one week a year if you're going to forget about it during the other 51 weeks of the year. And, again, don't just focus on the headline-grabbing green targets, for example.

I remind the government: Celebrate Earth Day, continue to set goals, but remain steadfast and keep in mind the rest of the year.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's an honour to be able to address this House today about Earth Day, about Earth Week.

As everyone in this chamber is well aware, in the 1960s Rachel Carson wrote her groundbreaking book *Silent Spring*, recognizing the environmental and health impacts of the large-scale global use of pesticides—pesticides that hadn't been known before the 1940s.

In 1969, a river in Ohio burst into flames, and that fire was one whose images were circulated around the world as an image of what was going on.

For many of us in this chamber, we will remember in the 1960s a time of the atmospheric testing of nuclear weapons, and Voice of Women and other groups going out and collecting the teeth of children that had strontium 90 in them. That was a time that gave birth to Earth Day, a time when we were dealing with very visible, substantial and, in some ways, far more comprehensible threats.

Over the generations, people in a variety of ways have fought politically and organized to make a difference. Jim Bradley, who's sitting here in this chamber: His name is synonymous with the fight against acid rain. In the 1980s, his name—and I was active in the environmental movement at that time—was synonymous with that fight, and he used his political authority and power to move forward the cleanup of our environment. I give him credit for that.

We have moved forward on a number of very visible issues, but I have to say to you that even with that, what we face now is far more perilous than what we've seen in the past. Climate change, the almost unchecked growth of emissions into the atmosphere, threatens the stability of our society and frankly the environmental systems that we depend on.

1600

This government is moving backwards. This government, with the cuts to Transit City, is going to take its already weak climate action plan and weaken it further. That is not defensible. It is not taking the leap that it needs to take in the west end of Toronto from diesel technology to clean electric. This is a time to make those sorts of leaps, those sorts of changes.

Tonight at Toronto city hall at 6 p.m., people are rallying to save Transit City. I want to say that today, in honour of all those who organized politically in the 1960s,

1970s, 1980s and on and those who today are organizing politically to push, we owe all of them a great deal. They want this society to move forward. They don't want it to stand still; they don't want it to move backward. They want it to move forwards so we can actually deal with the fundamental problems that we face. Those are the people we need to honour in today's hearing.

ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's an honour to speak very briefly on national Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Week. Let's get this straight: 100 Ontarians die every year because of lack of tissue and organ availability—100. These are preventable deaths. My seatmate and friend Peter Kormos has over and over again brought in a bill talking about presumed consent. Presumed consent means we assume your generosity; we assume you will donate your organs unless you specify otherwise.

Why is this necessary? Because only 17% of Ontarians have signed their health cards to indicate that they're willing to donate. It's not working; the system we have isn't working. Presumed consent does work in Israel, for over 10 years; in western Europe, in eastern Europe—all around the world. Presumed consent saves lives, but not in Ontario.

The question is, when is the McGuinty government going to do something tangible about this other than get up and talk about another week? When are those 100 Ontarians going to stop dying and when is the Ontario McGuinty government going to start acting?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Recognizing that the Speaker doesn't participate in debate and shouldn't have props, I just remind the members that some of us do have an old health card and there's nothing on your old health card. So fill out your little card like this, which you can pick up in a wide variety of locations, and put in it your wallet.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I wanted to bring mine out to show you, but I wasn't allowed to because it was a prop.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would have allowed it today.

Laughter.

Mr. Frank Klees: On a point of order, Speaker, and this is only to be constructive: It is important for people to know that just to sign that card means nothing if you have not ensured that that has been registered with OHIP and that your family knows about it. That's why it's so important that the government take that important step to link that registration of those cards.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I thank the honourable member for that, and I will be following up.

PETITIONS

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

Mr. John Yakabuski: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario families have already given Dalton McGuinty \$15 billion in health taxes, which was wasted on the \$1-billion eHealth scandal; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government is now cutting front-line public health care that will:

"—put independent pharmacies at risk;

"—increase the out-of-pocket fees people pay for their medication and its delivery; and

"—reduce critical patient health care services for seniors and people with chronic illnesses such as diabetes, heart disease and breathing problems; and

"Whereas, less than a year ago, Premier McGuinty supported expanding the responsibilities of pharmacists as a more cost-effective way to shorten wait times and enhance access to care; and

"Whereas the loss of a pharmacy in rural communities will mean an increased dependence on emergency rooms and family doctors, resulting in longer wait times and reduced access to care;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government stop its cuts to pharmacies."

I support this petition, sign my name to it and send it down with Darcy.

Interruption.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): It is my understanding that this side of the chamber has been warned that you are very welcome to observe the debate but not participate in the debate in any way. I extend that reminder to all sides.

Not knowing who my colleague warned previously, I will not ask the chambers to be cleared at this time. But if there are any more outbursts by our guests who are visiting us today, the chambers will have to be—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Durham, you know the rules. They apply to everyone.

I will just remind our guests who are here that they not participate.

TAXATION

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas a duplicated tax system puts our businesses at a disadvantage by increasing the costs of doing business; and

"Whereas a single, unified tax system reduces the burden on businesses by removing the provincial sales tax on goods and reducing administrative costs; and

"Whereas both Conservative and Liberal members of the provincial and federal Legislatures have voiced their support of a single sales tax; and

"Whereas local chambers of commerce, economists and experts are also supporting the move to a single tax system; and

"Whereas the recent RBC Economics report found that the HST is improving the competitiveness of Ontario

businesses by lowering the cost of doing business in Ontario; and

"Whereas a harmonized sales tax is expected to create jobs for Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That all parties of the provincial Legislature support the government of Ontario's plan to implement the HST and other tax reforms to benefit Ontario businesses and consumers."

I agree with this petition, I affix my signature and send it to the table via page Courtney.

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

Mr. Frank Klees: This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the McGuinty government has announced that it will impose substantial cuts to pharmacies; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty's cuts will:

"—reduce pharmacy hours during evenings and weekends;

"—increase wait times and lineups for patients;

"—increase the out-of-pocket fees people pay for their medication and its delivery; and

"—reduce critical patient health care services for seniors and people with chronic illnesses such as diabetes, heart disease and breathing problems; and

"Whereas these cuts will mean that some neighbourhood pharmacies will be forced out of business; and

"Whereas pharmacists are willing to work co-operatively with the government to find ways of reducing the cost of health care services and prescription drugs;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to call on Premier Dalton McGuinty and the Minister of Health to work with Ontario pharmacists to find a fair and reasonable solution to reduce the cost of drugs rather than impose their announced cuts that will have serious consequences to health care services in our community."

Because I fully support calling on the government to get back to the table and to negotiate a reasonable settlement, I'm pleased to add my signature to this petition.

FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas early childhood learning is a fundamental program in the development and education of Ontario's youth;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"To continue to expand full-day learning across the province;

"To continue to make our children a priority for this government;

"To continue investments in the infrastructure of our education system;

"To continue to support Ontario's families through these initiatives; and

"To never go back to the days of forgotten children and mismanagement of schools we saw in the 1990s. We applaud the new investments in full-day learning and look forward to their continued growth across the province."

I sign this petition and send it to the table with Andrea.

1610

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario from Shoppers Drug Mart on King Street in Brockville.

"Whereas Tim Hudak and the Ontario PC caucus support public health care and protecting access to front-line care;

"Whereas Ontario families have already given Dalton McGuinty \$15 billion in health taxes, which was wasted on the \$1-billion eHealth scandal. Now the McGuinty Liberals are cutting front-line public health care and putting independent pharmacies at risk;

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty's cuts will:

"—reduce pharmacy hours during evenings and weekends;

"—increase wait times and lineups for patients;

"—increase the out-of-pocket fees people pay for their medication and its delivery; and

"—reduce critical patient health care services for seniors and people with chronic illnesses such as diabetes, heart disease and breathing problems;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government stop its cuts to pharmacies."

I have signed this and will give it to Harry.

CHRONIC PAIN CLINICS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas St. Joseph's Health Centre Toronto has closed four clinics on March 31, 2010. These clinics include after-hours clinics, hearing clinics, cardiac rehab and chronic pain clinics.

"These clinics were mainly serving the seniors, and now a lot of seniors in this area don't have anywhere to go to find the services in the area which St. Joseph's Health Centre Toronto is able to serve.

"The chronic pain clinic was closed, giving the patients only two months to find a clinic that would take them. There are approximately 790 patients that still, to this day, haven't been able to find a clinic that does nerve blocks and epidurals. This is a very specialized field, and some of the large Toronto teaching hospitals don't do nerve blocks and epidurals.

"These patients are now starting to have severe pain, because their last nerve block is wearing off. These patients will have to start over from the beginning, so that

nerve blocks will make them more comfortable. If they are on disability or covered by a work-related injury, they will have to be on the programs longer.

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to please make room for these clinics in the southwest area of Toronto and open a nerve block and epidural chronic pain clinic that can hold all of the 790 patients that are in severe pain right now."

I agree with this petition, affix my signature and give it to Georgina to deliver.

TAXATION

Mr. Reza Moridi: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas a duplicated tax system puts our businesses at a disadvantage by increasing the costs of doing business; and

"Whereas a single, unified tax system reduces the burden on businesses by removing the provincial sales tax on goods and reducing administrative costs; and

"Whereas both Conservative and Liberal members of the provincial and federal Legislatures have voiced their support of a single sales tax; and

"Whereas local chambers of commerce, economists and experts are also supporting the move to a single tax system; and

"Whereas the recent RBC Economics report found that the HST is improving the competitiveness of Ontario businesses by lowering the cost of doing business in Ontario; and

"Whereas a harmonized sales tax is expected to create jobs for Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That all parties of the provincial Legislature support the government of Ontario's plan to implement the HST and other tax reforms to benefit Ontario businesses and consumers."

I have signed this petition.

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

Mrs. Julia Munro: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government is cutting front-line health care at pharmacies, which could mean higher prices, less service and even store closures for us,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Stop the cuts to front-line health care at our pharmacies now."

As I am in agreement, I have signed this and give it to page Darcy.

FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN

Mr. Pat Hoy: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas early childhood learning is a fundamental program in the development and education of Ontario's youth;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"To continue to expand full-day learning across the province;

"To continue to make our children a priority for this government;

"To continue investments in the infrastructure of our education system;

"To continue to support Ontario's families through these initiatives...."

I too have signed this petition.

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

Mr. Toby Barrett: Petitions continue to come in from Haldimand-Norfolk.

"Whereas the Ontario government is cutting front-line health care at pharmacies, which could mean higher prices, less service and even store closures for us;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Stop the cuts to front-line health care at our pharmacies now."

I fully agree and affix my signature to this petition.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. Bill Mauro: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas we currently have no psychiatric emergency service at the Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre in Thunder Bay, Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to support the creation of a psychiatric emergency service in emergency at the Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre in Thunder Bay, Ontario."

I support this petition and will put my signature to it.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Start the clock. I'd just remind members that photocopied petitions are not allowed. They need to be certified by the table, please.

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

Mr. John Yakabuski: I can assure you these are not photocopied. I thank Sheila Kimberley of Aikenhead's pharmacy in Renfrew for sending these down to me—a wonderful community pharmacist in my riding of Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario families have already given Dalton McGuinty \$15 billion in health taxes, which was wasted on the \$1-billion eHealth scandal; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government is now cutting front-line public health care that will:

"—put independent pharmacies at risk;

"—increase out-of-pocket fees people pay for their medication and its delivery; and

"—reduce critical patient health care services for seniors and people with chronic illnesses such as diabetes, heart disease and breathing problems; and,

"Whereas, less than a year ago, Premier McGuinty supported expanding the responsibilities of pharmacists as a more cost-effective way 'to shorten wait times and enhance access to care'; and

"Whereas the loss of a pharmacy in rural communities will mean an increased dependence on emergency rooms and family doctors, resulting in longer wait times and reduced access to care;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government stop its cuts to pharmacies."

I sign this petition in support of it and send it down with Mitchell.

EPILEPSY

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: "Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas more than 300,000 Canadians have epilepsy and some of the leading epilepsy organizations in Ontario have already proposed improvements in specialized care for those afflicted with epilepsy, and there is a need for improved access to these programs;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Improve access to epilepsy care programs by developing and establishing highly specialized epilepsy treatment centres in Ontario."

I agree with this petition, affix my signature and give it to Andrea to be delivered.

TAXATION

Mr. Glen R. Murray: "Whereas a duplicated tax system puts our businesses at a disadvantage by increasing the costs of doing business; and

"Whereas a single, unified tax system reduces the burden on businesses by removing the provincial sales tax on goods and reducing administrative costs; and

"Whereas both Conservative and Liberal members of the provincial and federal Legislatures have voiced their support of a single sales tax; and

"Whereas local chambers of commerce, economists and experts are also supporting the move to a single" sales "tax system; and

"Whereas the recent" Royal Bank of Canada "Economics report found that the HST is improving the competitiveness of Ontario ... by lowering the cost of doing business in" this province; "and

"Whereas a harmonized sales tax is expected to create jobs for Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That all parties of the provincial Legislature support the government of Ontario's plan to implement the HST

and other tax reforms to benefit Ontario businesses and consumers.”

I add my name to the petition and give it to page Carrington.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Orders of the day.

OPPOSITION DAY

PHARMACISTS

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I move that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario calls upon the Premier of Ontario to guarantee that Ontario seniors will not have to pay increased prices or have services reduced as a result of cuts the McGuinty Liberals made to front-line health care delivered by independent local pharmacists, announced on April 7, 2010.

This is addressed to the Premier of Ontario.

1620

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Debate?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'm pleased to rise today on behalf of the PC caucus to initiate debate on a matter of significant importance to Ontarians. I'm also pleased that a number of community pharmacists have joined us in the gallery today because they too are concerned about the cuts to front-line health care that will be achieved as a result of these changes.

In our view, the McGuinty government's proposed pharmacy reforms are a knee-jerk reaction to their sudden realization that our health care system is under siege. We all know that health care counts for approximately 46% of the Ontario budget and is growing rapidly, to the point that 70% of the budget will be taken up by health care costs within the next 10 years or so unless something changes. In the last decade, the Ontario government's health expenditure cost curve has grown by an average of 7.7% per year. According to a recent report entitled *Ideas and Opportunities for Bending the Health Care Cost Curve: Advice for the Government of Ontario*, which was prepared by the Ontario Hospital Association, the Ontario Federation of Community Mental Health and Addiction Programs and the Ontario Association of Community Care Access Centres, the major categories of expenditures have grown on average as follows: (1) hospital expenditures, 6.5% per year; (2) physician expenditures, 7.8% per year; (3) public health expenditures, 12.7% per year; (4) other institutions, including long-term-care homes, 7.2% per year; (5) drug expenditures, 9.2% per year.

Clearly, there is work to be done on a number of fronts in managing health care costs. But the report also notes, and this is significant, that “it must be recognized, however, that while there are pressures to find short-term solutions, there are few quick and easy” answers left. The PC caucus entirely agrees. There is no question that we need to reduce the cost of generic drugs, and we also agree that the system of professional allowances that was

put in place by this government, I should say, should be eliminated. The PC caucus does not dispute that, nor do the pharmacists. However, the changes proposed by the McGuinty Liberals are not a rational response to these issues.

The fact of the matter is that there is currently no overall pharma plan in Ontario. What we are seeing with these changes is nothing more than an attempt at a quick and easy fix to a complex problem so they can say to the people of Ontario, “Look, we were able to lower drug costs and save \$750 million.” They want us to believe that this can all be done with no harm to front-line health care in Ontario. If they really believe that, then they should be supporting this motion, but I rather doubt that they will. That's because the McGuinty Liberals know that these changes will only result in cutbacks to front-line care in Ontario, which will be particularly hard on seniors and people living with chronic illnesses.

The McGuinty Liberals are proposing to take \$750 million from our health care system and are forcing those costs onto the backs of Ontario's pharmacists. That's not good public policy, and it's grossly unfair. Pharmacists have repeatedly stated that the proposed changes will force them to dramatically scale back on the health care services they provide to people in communities across Ontario on a daily basis. These services include blood pressure monitoring, diabetes counselling, free prescription delivery and one-on-one counselling on drug interactions.

I've also been advised that many pharmacists work with seniors who are unable to make the copayment of \$200 per year and simply eat this cost in order to allow seniors to be able to access health care and medications. Other pharmacies—and the fact of the matter is that those pharmacies that can't survive by cutting back on their costs are simply going to have to close. In fact, it has been estimated that up to 300 community pharmacies will be forced to close their doors. The unfortunate part of all of this is that it didn't have to be this way. These changes didn't have to be brought forward and basically foisted on pharmacists and people in the province of Ontario. But the government didn't want to listen. Ontario's pharmacists brought forward a rational and comprehensive plan in the discussions leading up to this announcement that was made in April of this year, but their plans and proposals were simply dismissed out of hand by this government. The changes being made by the government now were a fait accompli. They didn't want to hear what the pharmacists had to say. No meaningful discussions ensued; therefore, we're left with the mess that we are in right now.

Had the McGuinty government listened, they would have realized that the pharmacists have a comprehensive plan to reduce the price of generic drugs, to phase out the professional allowances, and to deal with many other important issues affecting front-line health care, all without vilifying pharmacists, putting people out of work and taking away the valuable health care services provided every day by pharmacists across Ontario. Many of these services are provided to seniors and vulnerable Ontar-

ians, many of whom don't have a family physician. So what's going to happen as a result of these changes? More and more people are going to be forced into already overcrowded emergency rooms and physicians' offices, at least for those of them who actually have a family physician. The cost of this will be significant—it hasn't been factored into this equation—and, I would suggest, will virtually wipe out any perceived savings as a result.

At the end of the day, it's clear that the pharmacy changes proposed by the McGuinty government don't present a real solution to any of the problems in our system. Quite the contrary; they only create more problems.

What needs to be done? I think the answer is pretty clear. This government needs to listen to Ontario's pharmacists and work collaboratively with them to develop solutions that will protect health care for all Ontarians and not cut it. That's why we're calling upon the McGuinty government, and particularly the Minister of Health, to get back to the table, to listen to what the pharmacists are saying, and to engage in real and meaningful discussions with Ontario pharmacists that will present real, practical solutions for all Ontarians that will protect our health care and not cut it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'm pleased to rise as the leader of the official opposition and leader of the Ontario PC Party to say exactly where the Ontario PC caucus stands on the issue of Dalton McGuinty's plan to cut front-line pharmacy care.

The Ontario PC caucus stands with Ontario families, the Ontario PC caucus stands with Ontario seniors, and we stand with the worried moms and dads who are going to fight Dalton McGuinty's plans to close down neighbourhood pharmacies in our province each and every step of the way.

I'm pleased to say that our Ontario PC caucus stands for the protection of front-line health care services that Ontario families depend upon each and every day, at home in our communities, by the people we know and trust: Ontario's hard-working pharmacists. We stand behind them.

Since Dalton McGuinty's announcement to cut front-line services provided by pharmacies, our offices have been swamped with letters, postcards and petitions from concerned citizens. My own constituency office in Niagara West—Glanbrook has received more than 1,000 emails, postcards and names on petitions from families, seniors and those chronically ill patients who are worried about Dalton McGuinty's plan to cut front-line health care in their community.

We stand with our concerned family members who benefit from deliveries of prescriptions, who benefit from free clinics on diabetes, advice on medication, and open stores late at night when their son or daughter comes down with a fever—services provided each and every day, weekends and holidays, by Ontario's hard-working neighbourhood pharmacists; services they provide for all of us here in the House.

1630

There are people in the communities we trust to give us the right advice on prescriptions, to tell us what over-the-counter medications we should be giving our kids. There are people we trust to help explain issues that face our health, and face the health of elderly parents or grandparents.

As the member for Niagara West—Glanbrook, I'm proud to stand behind Scott Penner, who owns a pharmacy in my riding in the small town of Fonthill.

I'm proud to stand with Tom Betts, a constituent of mine from Grimsby and a pharmacist who has served the people of our province for 37 years. Mr. Betts contacted my office to say this about Dalton McGuinty's plans. Dalton McGuinty's plans "will in fact reduce accessibility to professional services/advice from the most accessible health care professional in our entire system."

We stand with Ontario's seniors, such as Gerald Hartley of Mount Hope, and families and patients from small towns like Terrace Bay, where pharmacist Chris Stewart fears the McGuinty cuts mean he will no longer be able to afford free fittings of orthopedic devices or, as he does in his job, give free medication and services to the working poor.

We stand with our pharmacists in cities like Toronto and in London, like Scott Coulter, whose family pharmacy has been operating in the health minister's hometown of London since 1973. Scott Coulter provides after-hours emergency services for young parents, for senior citizens, but with Dalton McGuinty's cuts, he questions whether he will be able to continue providing those services.

The Ontario PC caucus stands with CARP chairman Bruce Draper from Windsor—Essex, who says that "the McGuinty government's health care cuts are going to hurt seniors."

Pharmacists, by nature, are not political operatives. They're not protestors. They're not agitators. They simply want to go to work, to put on that lab coat and help local families and seniors with their health care needs. They work those long hours and weekends, and they provide services every day that keep Ontario seniors, families and the chronically ill from having to access more expensive parts of our health care system.

So where do we go from here? We're calling upon Dalton McGuinty to set aside his plans of cuts to pharmacy and work instead to ensure seniors have the comfort in knowing that the pharmacist they've relied upon for so many years will be there to help them monitor their prescriptions and give them advice on the different drugs and how they interact. He should be choosing, instead, to support front-line care to make sure that deliveries to senior's homes and for the chronically ill will continue. He should be choosing to ensure that Ontario families, seniors and patients won't be left with the prospect of reduced pharmacy hours on evenings or weekends, increased wait times or lineups or increased out-of-pocket fees for deliveries and health care seminars.

We call on Dalton McGuinty today to sit down with Ontario pharmacists, who have put good ideas on the table to reduce the cost of drugs, to maintain and strengthen the pharmacy services Ontario families rightly deserve.

I support the excellent work of my colleague, our health critic and deputy leader, Christine Elliott, and join in the call of this House to guarantee that Ontario's seniors will not have to pay increased prices or have services reduced as a result of the cuts the McGuinty Liberals have made to the front-line health care delivered by independent local pharmacies. And I hope to see my colleagues across the floor support this good motion.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's an honour and a privilege to rise on behalf of the New Democratic Party as their small business critic in support of the motion put forward by the PC Party, and I'm going to tell you why.

First of all, I want to set the stage a little bit as small business critic, because I think this is part of a larger war on small business that the McGuinty government has been waging for some time now. On Saturday evening, the Toronto Association of Business Improvement Areas celebrated 40 years of wonderful work in our communities across Ontario. The very first BIA in the world happened to start in my own riding on Bloor West, and they have been standing up for small business ever since.

We in the New Democratic Party hosted a press conference for TABIA to come here—this is going back a ways—to protest the introduction of the HST, because it's going to hurt small business as well as pharmacists. It's going to hurt all small business; 85% of their members are opposed to it. We had a press conference here, and the government wouldn't even meet with them.

Many of us remember the fact that many small independent butcher shops went out of business when this government brought in onerous regulations that cost the average butcher shop somewhere on the order of what it is going to cost pharmacists—\$200,000 to \$300,000—to meet the regulations. Most of them went out of business. It was ostensibly done for health reasons too. However, listeriosis didn't start with small independent butchers; it started with Maple Leaf Foods.

Over and over again, we see this government taking the part of big business over small business. This is another instance of exactly that, of course spun very differently, and I'm going to talk about how it's spun very differently. It's not the first time they have attacked small independent pharmacies either. I remember the WSIB regulations, where only some pharmacies—guess who, guess where—could process WSIB prescriptions. Not my local independent pharmacist; another attack on local, independent pharmacists on behalf of large chain pharmacies. This is what this government does.

The very symbol of what this government does is the fact that in the recent cabinet shuffle, they don't even have a minister in charge of small business anymore. They just eliminated small business right out of the portfolios—no small business ministry portfolio. That's

what this government has done for small business. Over and over again, we are seeing bankruptcies of all sorts of small businesses across our communities because of the actions of this government.

We in the New Democratic Party stand up for Main Street over Bay Street. We stand up for Main Street over the mall. Whether in rural Ontario, northern Ontario or downtown Toronto, we want to see vibrant Main Streets exist. We want to support young and small entrepreneurs. Guess where big business comes from? It comes from small entrepreneurs who grow into large ones.

This government is doing nothing to help small business, and let us not forget that small business accounts for 90% of the jobs in Ontario. That's the general atmosphere at Queen's Park ever since the McGuinty Liberals got elected. This is just another aspect of that attack.

Then we move to the direct attack on independent pharmacists. I want to highlight a letter I received from Dan Yurchuk, from High Park Pharmacy in my riding. He says: "I have calculated that this funding cutback will cost my pharmacy over \$200,000. I have no idea of how to absorb this loss without a drastic cut to the services we provide our patients, the reduction of staff and pharmacists and increased charges to my patients. I'm scrambling to figure out what to do."

I don't get it. What is the point of this measure? Has the government not sat down with small business—with small pharmacists—to talk about this? Have they not listened? These are health care workers whom this government has really declared war on with this measure. It's outrageous.

You've got to love the spin on this that's played out in the press: This is about saving patients money, and this is against Big Pharma. Give me a break. Come on. We all know that 76% of the drugs out there are patent drugs; they're not generic drugs. That's 24% of the drugs against 76%. This government isn't taking on Big Pharma; they're taking on an indigenous industry of generic drug manufacturing in this province. They're going to cost 9,000 jobs just from the generic drugs. My goodness, that's what they're doing. They're not taking on Big Pharma; they're taking on generic drug manufacturing here. Give me a break. The spin is absolutely out of whack. It has no bearing on the reality of the situation—absolutely out of whack.

1640

Quite frankly, we in the New Democratic Party, and I'm sure the pharmacists who are here, are in favour of reduced drug costs. Of course we are. There are other ways of getting there without putting independent pharmacists out of business. There are lots of other ways of getting there. My goodness.

As you've heard, these might even raise costs. We as a party federally have proposed a national policy of pharmacare. European countries have it; others have it. We certainly believe that everyone should have access to the drugs they need, the prescriptions they need, but you don't do that by putting independent pharmacies out of business.

Quite frankly, who's going to gain from this? It's going to be the big pharmacies. The big pharmacy chains are going to gain from this, because they sell everything else, as well as prescriptions. They'll gain. They can weather the storm. The Minister of Health knows this. Her brother-in-law sits on the board of Shoppers Drug Mart. She knows they're going to weather the storm. They'll do just fine, and they will do better, quite frankly, because they will have driven all their competition out of business.

Guess what? Guess what happens when you drive competition out of a market. We know that prices go up because they can, because there isn't competition. That's what happens. That's what they are doing.

It's interesting. For one of my local pharmacies, I was happy to go to the ribbon-cutting—I guess I'm going to be going to its closing now too—on Roncesvalles Avenue. He said to me, "If you go into Shoppers, it costs \$11.99 for dispensing fees. I charge a \$9.99 dispensing fee." Think about it. Think about it purely from a competitive aspect.

Again, the spin has nothing to do with the reality of this move—nothing to do with it.

The motion is well put. It's to guarantee that Ontario seniors will not have to pay increased prices. Please. I mean, my goodness. Just like my friend from Whitby-Oshawa, I assume the government is going to vote against this. I assume that what the government is basically going to say is that they are not going to guarantee that Ontario's seniors will not have to pay increased prices or have services reduced.

That, quite frankly, leads me to another issue, and that is the attack on seniors in this province by this government. This government has not only attacked small business; they've also attacked seniors in a variety of ways. The HST is going to affect seniors because they live on fixed incomes. They are going to pay more in utilities; they are going to pay more at point of purchase. They are going to pay more, and they know it. They know it. Seniors are going to pay more. They know it. Come on. And their salaries, many of them living on fixed incomes that are geared to the interest rates in the market, have been suffering already during the recession. They see their incomes going down.

A simple little measure for seniors is on the motion paper. It's been there forever; I put it forward. It's simply to let our seniors get into galleries and museums for free. It used to be the case in Ontario that they could do that. A simple little measure like that—nothing doing. Nothing doing there for seniors.

Certainly for my seniors, and we see them often in my constituency office, this is not their issue. Their issue is how to pay the rent. Their issue is the lack of affordable housing. Their issue is long-term care—where did it go?—and the lack of care in long-term-care homes. Their issues are all of the above. Honestly, not one senior has ever walked into my office and said, "I think pharmacists should go out of business because I want to pay less for generic drugs." That has never happened yet in my office. But we've heard from them on a host of other

issues that have to do with health care, especially long-term care, retirement homes etc., and seeing this government absent on all of those other issues that are critical and important to seniors.

Let's make no mistake about it: If the government votes against this motion, what they're saying is that maybe Ontario seniors will have to pay increased prices or have services reduced. In fact, possibly that's what they're in favour of. That's what they are voting for. When they vote against this motion, we want to be very clear about what it is that they are against. It's very clear that they're against independent pharmacies—that's obvious. They wouldn't be sitting here today if it wasn't the case.

It's hard to know where to begin and where to end with the McGuinty Liberals. I'm going to leave some room and some time, because I believe my benchmate is coming back, but suffice to say—oh, I should touch on one thing, too: the \$100-million promised fund for pharmacies that hasn't really been announced, and we have no idea, really, of the extent to which this will offset the withdrawal of current funding. Again, that's a hallmark of this government, these kind of vague promises that they put out there about—"Don't worry," they say, "we'll take care of you. Something will happen last minute to prevent you all from going out of business."

We've heard that before, have we not, friends in this House? Have we not heard that before? I heard that before Karl's butcher shop closed on Roncesvalles. It's still closed. I heard that before on children's aid societies, which are mandated to provide care, before the government came in with just enough to keep some of them open, not all of them open. Right up to the last minute with daycare centres, they were pointing fingers at the federal government before they, at the last minute, gave just enough money just to barely keep them open. Still, many of them are worried about closing because of the implementation possibly of full-day learning, which we support, but again, badly implemented, badly thought out, no consultation—the usual.

It is interesting—a couple of challenges to the government that I actually would like answers on. One of them is: Why did you get rid of small business as a ministry, as a portfolio interest? Why? I just would love an answer to that question. It's shocking to me.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Not a priority for this government, Cheri.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I guess, obviously. Certainly, my main streets are feeling the impact of this government. That's number one.

Number two: Did they not think of the ramifications of this move on independent pharmacists before they brought it in? Did they not consult? Did they not listen to health care workers called pharmacists? They are health care workers, you know. Did they not listen to them? Is this news to this government?

I guess, finally, because they must know the impact, particularly those of you who have one or two pharmacies in your communities, and people are going to have to travel sometimes hundreds of kilometres to get to

one, particularly those members—I'd like to hear what they really intend to do, because they're making kind of vague allusions to, "Yes, don't worry about it. We'll help you out. Don't worry; you won't have to close." I would like to actually know what it is they're going to do. What are the exact steps that this government is going to take to prevent this catastrophe from happening?

Three simple answers.

Interjection.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Yes. I hear, over here, talk about transit. I'm here. In an hour, some of our benchmates will be at Transit City in Toronto, where this government promised \$4 billion, and then—gone. Plans were done. They were about to order new cars. They were about to build light rail transit, and then, bang—gone.

Interjection.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It was a promise; exactly. It was a promise on behalf of Dalton McGuinty. City hall will be packed with people who wonder what happened to that promise, because we're Torontonians. That's great; now we're going to deal with seniors, who have difficulty often with mobility issues—they are going to not have the subways promised, not have the light rail promised, not have the transit promised to get to the non-existent local pharmacy to get their non-existent prescription.

This is insanity. It has nothing—I'll repeat, absolutely nothing—to do with the government fighting Big Pharma on behalf of consumers. We have to say that over and over again because of the spin on this. It has absolutely nothing to do with the government fighting Big Pharma. Big Pharma is not even in this picture. They're not even in this picture.

1650

We're talking about an indigenous Ontario industry you're driving out of business. We're talking about generic drug manufacturing, not patent drug manufacturing. We're talking about independent pharmacists, not huge multinational chains. That's what we're talking about.

And we're talking in this motion about seniors. We're asking you simply to guarantee one very simple thing—one very simple, ethical thing—and that is: Don't hurt our seniors in doing this. If you can't even guarantee that, it's a very sad day in Ontario.

At any rate, I'll leave it at that. Suffice to say, another day, another Dalton McGuinty day: another day of broken promises, another day of lack of consultation, another day of a war on small business, another day of ignoring seniors and other health care needs in our community—another Liberal day in Ontario.

Thank you, member from Whitby-Oshawa, for bringing forward this motion. We certainly support it. We certainly support lower drug prices, but not this way, folks. We certainly support help for seniors; this isn't going to do it. We certainly support, on this side of the House, small business, but this is an absolute war on small business.

Please answer my questions: Where did small business go? What exact measures are you going to take to stop this catastrophe? Exact measures: when, where, how

much. We'd like to know and they'd like to know how their businesses are going to be saved.

I'm interested in the senior piece too, whether you're actually going to vote against a guarantee that this isn't going to cost seniors more. I'm interested in that too.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I welcome the opportunity to speak to this very, very important issue that we are dealing with in Ontario right now.

I'd like to start by welcoming the pharmacists who are here today. I want you to know that we support the work you do. We consider you to be vital members of our health service delivery team. We actually want to pay you directly for providing services that customers need. That's why we expanded your scope of practice under Bill 159, and it's why we are putting \$150 million—\$100 million of that is new money—into paying pharmacists directly for services to customers.

I also want to welcome, in the opposition members' gallery, Mark Valesano, executive vice-president of Shoppers Drug Mart. Welcome, Mark, today.

The Leader of the Opposition has suggested that we sit down and talk to pharmacists about this plan. I would love nothing more than to do that. We have some important decisions to make about how we are going to allocate that \$150 million, plus the \$24 million to support rural pharmacists.

However, I'm very sorry to inform you that the Ontario Pharmacists' Association—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Member for Renfrew, the odd quip is tolerated, but just a continuous dialogue isn't.

Minister.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The Ontario Pharmacists' Association has actually cancelled two scheduled meetings with us. I received a letter today saying that the proposed April 23 meeting would be premature, and in fact, they suggest that we postpone the meeting until after May 15.

I want to repeat: I want to sit down with pharmacists. I want to talk to them about how we will allocate the significant dollars, the many millions of dollars, to support pharmacists in doing their work. We have posted the regulations and we look forward to hearing from pharmacists their reaction to those regulations.

I think it's important that we remember why it is we are making these changes. We are making them for patients. We are making them for hard-working Ontarians who are paying far too much for generic drugs. And we're making these changes for taxpayers, who deserve a government that will stand up for them when they are not getting good value for their money. We pay far too much for our prescription drugs, as much as five times as much as some US states pay for the most popular generic drugs for diabetes, for high blood pressure and for other common health conditions.

By far, the biggest reason that we are paying such inflated prices for generic drugs is these so-called profes-

sional allowances, the payments paid by generic companies to pharmacies in exchange for stocking their products on their shelves. By eliminating these professional allowances, we will be able to cut the cost of drugs by 50% and more. We will also be able to clean up a system that has been open to widespread abuse.

I heard the member opposite talk about also wanting to eliminate these professional allowances. Tomorrow, Bill 16, the budget bill, comes up for second reading. I hope you will vote to eliminate the professional allowances tomorrow, when you have that opportunity.

The elimination of the professional allowances will generate savings that we will be able to reinvest in new drugs, more drugs, and also use to increase the directed compensation for Ontario's pharmacists. Professional allowances, as I say, are payments that we started to address in Bill 102 in 2006. They are supposed to be used to support direct patient care. However, according to their own audited numbers, 70% of the money that pharmacies receive in professional allowances is not being spent on that direct patient care; only 30% of the money received in professional allowances is going where it was intended to go. That is simply unacceptable. They have been used to increase the bottom line of pharmacies, including, of course, the big chain drugstores. Our government's reforms will clean up the abuse, eliminate the unaccountable system, increase direct payments to pharmacists for the valued services they provide and deliver less-costly drugs for Ontario's patients and seniors.

We know that our very well-trained pharmacists provide a most valuable and necessary service for Ontarians. Through these reforms, our government is ensuring that pharmacists are fairly compensated for helping patients by increasing dispensing fees and paying for those additional services provided to patients. I also want to make clear that we have a special \$24 million set aside to support rural pharmacies, pharmacies in those areas where there may be only one or two pharmacies in a community. We will increase their dispensing fee even more.

As I said, we are committed to paying pharmacists directly for many of the services that they are claiming they will have to eliminate. Programs like MedsCheck will continue. We are prepared to pay them for their services. We want to sit down with them and talk to them about what services they can and will provide and how much would be fair compensation for them.

The party opposite is on the side of big pharmacies and nobody else. They are on the side of rebates; we are on the side of lower prices. Even the federal Competition Bureau understands that this rebate system is driving up the cost of drugs and padding the profits of big chain stores. I don't know why you have chosen the side of big chain drugstores, but I can tell you that we have chosen the side of lower drug prices for all Ontarians.

We're putting money back in the system. We're increasing transparency. We're on the side of people with cancer. We're on the side of people with diabetes. We're on the side of people who need those drugs. I am proud to take the position I have taken.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Frank Klees: I want to begin my remarks by saying I wish I had a lot more time; I only have three minutes because my colleagues want to speak to this as well.

But I want to start off by reading the words of a constituent who is here today, Mrs. Aziza Amarshi. Here's what she said to me in an email: "All we are asking the government to do is pay us fairly for our services. We are asking the government to negotiate, not legislate." I believe that the problem we have here is as much about how the government has conducted itself with this profession as it is about the consequences of their action.

1700

For the government to have been involved in negotiations with this profession for a number of months, and then, at the very last minute, to bail on that and simply announce a measure that is going to strip away, on average, \$300,000 out of the average-size pharmacy in this province is unconscionable. There is not a business in this province that could sustain having \$300,000 of revenue stripped out of its bottom line overnight. This industry, in its negotiations, has offered to work with the government and, over the next four years, reduce costs by some \$1.3 billion. That was a co-operative effort. There were a number of mechanisms involved in that proposal, and the government chose to ignore that.

This is much more about the battle between the government and the pharmacists of this province. It is a fundamental principle of the government of this province interfering in commercial terms by legislation. This is a principle that this House cannot ignore, because my question to the people in this province is: Which profession and which business is next in the crosshairs of this government? It doesn't respect them sufficiently to negotiate on this very important issue and, overnight, has no conscience about the consequences to their businesses or the consequences to the patients that they serve on the front line.

We stand with the pharmacists on this. We're calling for the government to get back to the table to negotiate a reasonable settlement, a reasonable commercial term under which these important health care deliverers can in fact do their job, meet the needs of people in our community, and have the self-respect that they so deserve as important health care professionals. It's unconscionable how this government is conducting itself with these people.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate? The minister of industry, trade and commerce.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: Thank you so much—and small business, I'm very proud to say.

Let me say today that I'm very happy to have an opportunity to speak to the constituents of Windsor West. Compliments of some of Big Pharma, some of which we have represented here in the House, we've had an opportunity to have an entire ad placed in my local newspaper, and I want to thank you for that. And the executive vice-president is here. I think my constituents just wanted to

know that you paid for that ad, because that might have tainted a little bit how they would interpret the kind of data that you chose to put in that newspaper about their local MPP. Because what you said was that we've cut health care in my community. There isn't anyone in my community who could actually be in Windsor to compare when I started in 1995 as an MPP to today. It has been a revolution of driving health care and bringing services to my community. It has been my lifeblood as a local MPP, and that is why today's debate is so important—

Mr. Frank Klees: On a point of order, Speaker: I believe that it is highly inappropriate and against the standing orders of this place for a member to stand in her place and debate with a member of the audience.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you.

Mr. Frank Klees: I ask—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I've heard your point of order. I'll direct the minister to speak through the Chair, please.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I'll tell you what's inappropriate. Inappropriate is advertising that is filled with lies. And I'll tell you—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I ask the minister to withdraw that.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I withdraw.

I am convinced that the people of Windsor West will know: Why would Sandra not be comfortable with an ad on a full page of the paper that puts my picture, and not a very good one, I might add—but anyway, you probably did that one on purpose. But you know what? It's about the message to my constituents.

My question is this—and I have asked this question for a number of years. Many people in the drug industry, especially Big Pharma, might know this question, and it is this: Why is Ontario, as the largest buyer of drugs in Canada, the second-largest in the world, paying the highest prices? When I go home and talk to my neighbours in my neighbourhood, when I go home and talk to those retirees, people who have worked all their lives to be seniors today to access a health system, they're going to ask that one question. They're going to say, "Why is Ontario paying so much for those drugs?"

Do you know who else asked that question over the years since I've been in this House? Jim Wilson, former Minister of Health; Liz Witmer, former Minister of Health; Dave Johnson, former Minister of Health—you'd kind of forget him; he was only there for a few months. All the former ministers since I've been in my place have tried to do the right thing and bring Ontario in line with paying the kind of prices we should pay.

When you compare other places like Europe, even they cumulatively don't have a large account like the Ontario government. We need to get a better value for those drugs. When we finally talk about health care, when we have made the significant investments we have, in particular in a community like Windsor and in Essex county, which the Speaker will know so well, it is imperative that we come up with the value discussion.

That is why I too have emails from my constituents: "I congratulate your government for finally taking action on the issue of pharmacy rebates from generic drug manufacturers and inflated Canadian generic drug prices." Thank you. Without that ad in the local newspaper, people might not have known we're actually doing the right thing.

And for the number of pharmacists who are calling my office—and some of them have—because they want to have a meeting with me, let me tell you this. I want to have a meeting with them, and I want to ask them these questions: Explain to me how I could possibly go to my neighbourhood, how I could possibly go back to my constituents and say, after we have spent so many millions in my community to bring in so many new programs in health care, that despite a massive deficit we're facing since we got over the last one, compliments of the Conservative government, we are turning our attention to value, and that we are going to have to address this across the whole of the health system, not just drugs. Drugs are just a part of this.

What we need to do is address what the pharmacists should be paid for. When you go on their website and look at the kind of work they do, the kind of work they could do because of the skill set they have, that's the conversation the government needs to engage in with the pharmacists.

The pharmacists need to come to the table to have that conversation. "Are you supposed to be giving injections, because you can; refilling prescriptions without having to go back to the primary care in the system?" This is an imperative discussion to have. And to think—

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I heard the minister say she is the minister of small business, yet it says here that she's the Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): What she's the minister responsible for is not my purview.

Minister?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I think it's really important for me to tell my constituents that we are looking at value for the taxpayers of Ontario. When we pay for drugs, we want the best price. I'm not embarrassed to say we want a better price. If that means the elimination of professional allowances, to replace that with something that is imperative that the pharmacists ought to have in their hands to show value for the work they do as pharmacists, let that conversation begin. That conversation hasn't started.

It's not fair to say, "The professional allowance is gone. What's coming in its place?" Come to the table and have that conversation, but do not go to the general public and tell half the story when the other half would shock and appal most constituents across Ontario when they know that we pay outrageous prices and that we, Ontario, are the second-largest buyer of drugs in the world.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to be able to join the debate today on my colleague's resolution to save Ontario pharmacies. The member for Whitby—Oshawa, our party's health critic, has clearly outlined the health concerns caused by this government's attacks on pharmacies. As our party's critic for small business, I want to speak to the economic effects on pharmacies, large and small.

In light of the debate that has gone on, and in recognition of the amount of time we have as a caucus, I'm going to reduce my comments to what I consider to be the most important part of this. As I am the critic for small business, I've looked at it with that lens, and I've had many, many pharmacists in my constituency call me.

1710

But what becomes clear to me is the fact that what we're talking about are three things for pharmacists. The first one is the rejection of the negotiation process. The fact that people were working together—the pharmacists were working together to ensure that they had an opportunity to present a credible plan to the government. The second is the betrayal of this government to make unilateral decisions; the fact that people grow up in this country expecting their government to consult, expecting the government to respect expertise. Thirdly, this has led to a fear of the future. Those pharmacists and those community members who have written, petitioned and called me: They fear for the viability of the pharmacy in the community.

That's why we are here, and that's why we wanted to make sure we had today's opportunity to bring this to debate. The time is now. The government must listen to pharmacists and stop this destructive plan.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate.

Mr. Howard Hampton: In the brief time that I have left, I want to raise some issues which I raised the other day. My constituency is the largest geographic constituency in the province—40% of the geography in one constituency. There are a number of small towns—towns like Sioux Lookout, Red Lake, Rainy River, Emo—where there is one pharmacy. It's a small community pharmacy, and in many cases—most cases—it's the owner/operator of the pharmacy. When I talk with those people operating the pharmacies in Rainy River, Emo, Sioux Lookout and Red Lake, they're very direct; they say that this government's legislation is going to put them out of business.

This might not seem to upset people in Toronto too much, except that the nearest pharmacy to Red Lake would be 200 kilometres away, and in the winter the 200-kilometre drive becomes easily a three-hour drive. The closest alternative pharmacy to Rainy River would be Emo. When I talk to the pharmacist who owns the small community pharmacy there, he says, "This, too, will close me." So they would end up travelling almost 100 kilometres to the next community to a pharmacy.

When you talk with people about this, when you talk with these owner/operators of the pharmacies, they're very reasonable. They say, "Here are my books. I don't

have the luxury of selling expensive perfume. I don't have a huge store where I stock food products. I'm essentially providing pharmaceutical medicines and other over-the-counter pharmaceutical products. I provide this service to this community. It may be 6,000 people. With the surrounding population, it may be 7,000 or 8,000 people. This is the work that I do. I can tell you, because I've done the numbers, that what the government is proposing will put me out of business."

So my question is—and I've asked this question a few times now in the House, and I've yet to hear a member of the government stand up and provide an answer: What are these people supposed to do—go 100 kilometres, 200 kilometres to the next drugstore?

It is more than that. A lot of the communities are First Nation communities; 25 of them are First Nation communities that you have to fly into. Let me tell you: Those communities do not have a community pharmacy. They rely upon the pharmacy in Sioux Lookout and the pharmacy in Red Lake to provide them with all kinds of information about the prescription medicines that have been prescribed for them, to provide all kinds of services that are never compensated for by the government. So I have 25 First Nation communities saying, "What happens to us? What happens to us? Where are we going to find the pharmaceutical services? Do you want us to fly to Thunder Bay?" I ask these questions in all honesty and in all earnestness. I'm looking for an answer from the government.

I say to these pharmacists, "The government says that they're going to give you a little bit more on the prescription fee." And they say, "Well, look, I've done the numbers. I'll get this much more on the prescription fee, and I'll lose this much. That's why I'm out of business."

I suppose the Liberal government can hold an editorial board with the Toronto Star or the Toronto Globe and Mail, who probably have never heard of Red Lake and, what's more, couldn't care less what happens there; who probably haven't heard of Sioux Lookout and the 25 fly-in First Nations that have to rely on the small community pharmacies there. But this is a government, and the government should care about what happens to these people. The government should care that pharmacists—honest, decent people who have been providing a community service, a health service for many years—are saying, in very reasonable language, "What you're proposing to do will put me out of business, and I don't see any other alternative for the 6,000 or 7,000 people who live in this community and the surrounding rural area." What the government has proposed in terms of, "Well, we'll just increase the prescription fee a bit"—they're very clear, they're very objective: It's not going to do it.

I just want to tackle the other part of what the government says, their media spin. Their media spin is they're taking on Big Pharma. Well, this is not Big Pharma. The big pharmaceutical companies will not be affected by this legislation whatsoever. They account for 76% of the cost of the prescription medicine system, and they're not going to be touched by this one bit, not one bit. Yes, this may take some money out of the pocket of the 24% of

the prescription medicine system that is provided through generic providers. But I'll tell you, I don't think the generic drug companies are going to lose on this. They've got the size and they've got enough market dominance that they're not going to get hurt by this. They'll simply shed it off onto those independent pharmacies. And independent pharmacies that try to stay in business will have to somehow charge the very people they're trying to serve with delivery charges, consultation charges and all kinds of other fees if they hope to stay open.

I say to the government: Yeah, you've held an editorial board with the Toronto Star and the Toronto Globe and Mail and they swallowed your line. But all those people out there—real people who go to their family doctor and get prescriptions for medicine to help them maintain their health—are asking, “What happens to us?”

They're asking these questions very reasonably. They're not holding rabble-rousing demonstrations in front of the Legislature. They're not threatening to do something dire. They're simply saying, “Look, there is no other option in my community. There's no option within 50 kilometres. There's no option within 70 kilometres. In some cases, there's no option within 200 kilometres. Will the government please stand up and give us the answer? Tell us what is going to happen when my community pharmacy goes out of business.”

To demonstrate their point, some of them have made appointments with me for this weekend. They want me to come in, and they want to open up their books and say, “Here's the money I make. Here's how I make it. Here are my costs. If you can tell me how I'm going to make this circle work after the government takes out a major portion of my income, then please do. Please come and show me how I'm going to do that.”

1720

I make this offer to the Minister of Health: Instead of simply promoting the spin lines all the time, you come with me to Emo, you come with me to Rainy River, you come with me to Sioux Lookout, you come with me to Red Lake. You come to those 25 fly-in First Nation communities that will never get any service from Shoppers Drug Mart, never get any service from Pharma Plus. Most of the people who live in those communities wouldn't know what a Shoppers Drug Mart is. I say this to the Minister of Health: You come with me and you explain to those people how they're going to get a service, because they do not see it. They have sat down, they have looked at it, they've tallied up the numbers, they've looked at it again, they've called their accountant, they've called the bank manager and said, “How is this going to work?” The answer they keep getting back is, “It's not going to work. You're going to be out of business.”

Now, maybe the government thinks, “Oh, well, you know, we'll just win this spin battle and then afterwards maybe we can provide some sort of mail-in service or some sort of once-a-week delivery system to these communities.” This is not like making widgets. Talk to any nurse, especially a nurse who's dealing with seniors.

The whole issue of dealing with someone's prescription medicine regime and following it and watching it clearly has a direct impact on their health, clearly has a direct impact on their life. If you leave all kinds of communities without service or with service that has been substantially reduced, then you are really playing with people's lives, and no government should do that. No government should engage in those kinds of politics.

It's too bad the Minister of Health isn't here. One would have thought the minister would be here.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Member, you've been around a long time. You know that we don't refer to members who are in the House or not.

Mr. Howard Hampton: Okay, that's fine. I make the invitation anyway. I invite the minister to come with me to some of the small towns in my constituency where there is one community pharmacy, and come to the 25 fly-in First Nations who have to rely upon a community pharmacy. That community pharmacy provides all kinds of services that they are not paid for and that the prescription medicine system such as the provincial government operates doesn't pay for. I invite the minister to come with me and explain to those people how this is going to work, how they are going to be able to continue to provide services to people who need these services, services that for some people are a matter of life and death.

Now, hopefully over the next few weeks the government is going to be prepared to listen to pharmacists, to actually engage in a dialogue with pharmacists, to actually listen to some of the alternatives that pharmacists have put forward, and the government will drop this phony line that it's taking on Big Pharma, that this is about taking on the big corporate giants in the pharmaceutical industry. Beating up on small, independent drug-store owners is not taking on Big Pharma, and putting small independent drugstore owners out of business and depriving people of service is not beating up on Big Pharma, no matter what the Globe and Mail and Toronto Star editorial pages say.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. David Zimmer: There's a lot of opinion and a lot of emotion flying around here, so let me bring this back to some facts, some context for this debate.

First of all, here's the really big context: Health care costs now in Ontario are about 43%. If we don't get them under control, health care costs are going to move to 70% of provincial revenues. That's a number that the province cannot sustain. That's a fact.

Second fact: Generic prescription drugs play a big part of that expenditure. If we get the generic drugs part right, if we do something with these professional allowances, the estimates are that we'll reduce the cost of generic drugs in the province of Ontario by some 50%.

Now, what's the situation here in Ontario? Here are some comparables. There's a blood pressure medicine that in Ontario costs about five cents. In the United States, it costs 10 cents. That's five times more. In New Zealand, it costs 21 times more than it does in Ontario,

and in Europe, Germany and the UK, it's three and a half times.

There's another prescription medicine, for epilepsy. In the United States it costs 2.6 times more than in Ontario; New Zealand, 1.5 times more; Europe, almost two times more. There's another prescription drug, for diabetes. These are all common medications for common ailments. In the United States, 1.5 times more; New Zealand, 6.2 times more; France and Germany, 1.7 times more. There's another drug to deal with gastrointestinal disorders.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Less.

Mr. David Zimmer: Yes, the other way. Sorry. But you get the point. In the United States, five times more; New Zealand, 15; and in Germany—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Okay. Order.

Mr. David Zimmer: Those numbers get reversed on the chart. The point is, there are common medications that are hugely more expensive in the rest of the world. Why is that? That's because there are about \$750 million of professional allowances that get tacked on to the costs, because those costs go back to the pharmacies in terms of rebate.

Big Pharmacy is the beast that we're trying to manage here. The fact is, for small pharmacies, when you read closely what we're doing, there's a \$150-million fund set up that is going to go to assist the pharmacies to provide better and further and more health care, patient care and coverage. That's going to go to the folks who are sitting here watching that debate, so they're not going to be left out there on a limb.

Now, how about some endorsements? Let me tell you what Christine Elliott, the member for Whitby—Oshawa, who is the Conservative health and long-term care critic, said on April 14: "I don't think anyone would suggest that the professional allowance system is an ideal system to be working under." We agree. We're going to reform it.

Now, what do the stakeholders out there in the community say? Susan Eng, who is a vice-president for CARP: "We welcome the improvement to affordability and potential for more access to new drugs and will encourage similar measures in the rest of the provinces."

The chief executive officer of the Canadian Cancer Society: "The Canadian Cancer Society applauds the Ontario government on the changes ... that will enable greater access to funded drugs" and cancer care in Ontario.

The director of research for the Heart and Stroke Foundation: "The Heart and Stroke Foundation applauds the McGuinty government's changes to improve the drug care system. The announced changes should improve the sustainability of the public drug system, which is important to all patients in the province given the increasing burden of costs on the health care system." The quotes go on and on and on. Everybody recognizes that we've got to get this problem under control. That's the big picture. This is a fair way to go about it: huge savings that will be reinvested in health care; and for the small mom and-pop

and neighbourhood pharmacies, there's a \$150-million fund set up that is going to assist them to continue with their drug patient care.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: In the few moments I have to speak, firstly, I want to respect the pharmacists who are here today. They see first-hand the debate of just how poorly prepared this government is to try to defend their position. I thank you for taking the time that you have today to bring some significance to this comment this afternoon.

I'm also pleased that I have worked with the pharmacists in my riding, and I just want to get clearly on the record that I depend on them to tell me—because their patients depend on them in the communities. I think of the small communities in my riding where they're the principal employer in many cases. They're the only health care provider in the community. People trust them, and now they are being attacked. There's war against these small towns because they're the ones at the bottom of the heap that haven't got the diversification that often bigger Shoppers Drug Marts may have. The business plan is being destroyed by this government—without fair consultation, I might add.

1730

I want to comment on the email that a couple of young pharmacists who are here today sent me, Richard Smith and Peter Meraw. They are with Pharmasave in a small community where I know—they're the only business in town in Minden—they serve with great passion, after talking with them today, their constituents.

I also talked to my constituents, who are well represented. Traditionally, it's Mark Borutskie from the IDA store, as well as Doug Brown and Lisa Brown. Doug Brown has a Shoppers Drug Mart in Port Perry and Lisa in Uxbridge. Brian Doddridge has the Medicine Chest in Bowmanville. Muhammad Ishsaq is a pharmacist in Bowmanville, as well as Azim Manji.

One of the people I've known for many, many years, who was on the OPA, is Neale McLean. I want to thank him for advising me. They are a highly regarded family, and, indeed, his daughter's a pharmacist working in the health clinic in the community. That's where patients often go when the clinic is backlogged.

Tino Montopoli is the only pharmacist, the only health care provider, directly located in Orono.

I commend all of the pharmacists in my riding: Robert Moore in Uxbridge, as well as Mel Pathak, who's in Port Perry; Goerge Tadros, the IDA in Bowmanville; Phon Tan, who's in Newcastle; Lorraine Watson in Bowmanville; and David Zhao, who is actually in the drugstore pharmacy in the Loblaws store. There are others that I want to thank for keeping me informed.

In conclusion, I just want to make sure that you understand, at least as I'm being told. Here's an example of one generic drug: digoxin is now \$38 under the generic, and that generic is being discontinued and replaced by a drug called Toloxin, and that drug is going to be \$60. That's the real story here. They're not taking on Big

Pharma; they're taking on the pharmacist who serves your community.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mr. Rick Johnson: It's a pleasure to rise and get involved in this debate today. I want to thank the minister for her words earlier today.

We're entering a period in Ontario and, indeed, in Canada where the baby boomers are retiring, turning 65 and qualifying for the Ontario drug plan. This is going to have incredible pressure upon the system as it goes on. There will be more people over the age of 65 than at any point in history, more people accessing the plan. The numbers are going to grow dramatically over the next few years. Our Ontario drug plan is currently costing the province \$4.7 billion, more than 10% of our annual health care budget.

We need to act now to preserve the plan. I am fearful of a future government saying, "We can no longer afford this any more." I've lived through those types of cuts previously from 1995 to 2003, when the previous Conservative government closed 28 public hospitals, eliminated 5,000 hospital beds and cut \$557 million from hospital budgets in their first two years.

What we need to do is ensure that our seniors and our vulnerable citizens have access to the Ontario drug plan. We need to ensure that our drug plan is sustainable. Our move to lower drug costs will help ensure that the Ontario drug plan is sustainable.

We are faced with important choices. We were elected to make important decisions. We believe in the Ontario drug plan and the support that it provides to our seniors and our most vulnerable citizens.

The Canadian Association for Retired Persons, the Canadian Cancer Society, the Ontario Nurses' Association and the Heart and Stroke Foundation are just a few of the associations that are supporting our moves.

Our government has clearly demonstrated our support for health care since being elected, including our supports for seniors. Our living-at-home strategy is just one idea where we've invested \$1.1 billion over the past couple of years.

What is the impact on Ontario families? What will the impact of our changes be on people in Ontario who aren't part of the Ontario plan, who don't have a drug benefit plan through their job? Once our reforms take full effect, a woman who pays for a generic birth control pill out of her own pocket could save more than \$80 a year. Someone who takes ramipril, a generic drug for high blood pressure, will save \$160 a year.

I am proud to stand in this House to support the changes our government has put forward. I'm proud to stand in this House as a representative for Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock to speak up for the hundreds of people in my riding who have contacted my office to say thank you for explaining the other side of the issue of bringing down drugs costs. I thank the local pharmacies in my riding for having people contact my office, giving me and my staff a chance to explain the reasons we have taken this action. It's about making tough choices to ensure that the Ontario drug plan is there for our children.

It's the right thing to do and I'm pleased to speak in favour of this.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm very pleased to support the motion that has been introduced by my colleague the member for Whitby-Oshawa. I think she has done an outstanding job in presenting her remarks today and letting everybody know what our concerns are all about.

We're obviously very concerned about the gradual erosion of front-line health care services that we've seen since this government was first elected in 2003, starting with cuts to physiotherapy and chiropractic services, and the list goes on and on; we could include optometry there as well. We now have a situation where, again, it looks like there are going to be cuts to front-line health care.

We're very concerned about the impact that this is going to have on seniors in this province and certainly on other people as well, because we see a possible reduction of services. We also see a possible increase in prices, and, of course, we're very concerned about the independent pharmacists who have been writing to us and sharing with us their concerns. For them, it could well mean that some of their pharmacies are going to close as a result of this initiative. Others certainly aren't going to provide the additional services that they're currently providing, whether it's one-on-one counselling or delivery of the drugs to the patients in their care.

But I want to tell you that my mother, who is 89, depends on her pharmacist. I think many seniors in this province would tell you that they see that independent pharmacist as a very significant person in helping to keep them as healthy as they possibly can. They do spend a lot of time in one-on-one counselling with the people who come into the pharmacy. The last thing we want to see is any of these pharmacies closed and seeing a very negative impact on seniors and others.

This government talks about how they're going to cut costs and how they're going to make things better. There was an opportunity for them to have worked with the pharmacy community. The pharmacy community had proposals that could have seen some savings, and this government, regrettably, arbitrarily decided that they knew best. They brought down the hammer, they didn't allow for any discussion or an opportunity for any compromise and they weren't prepared to accept the good recommendations that were being put forward.

I am pleased to support the independent pharmacists in my community. One of the people who has been writing me often is Bryan Hastie. I appreciate the communications I've received from Bryan and from all of the other independent pharmacists in Kitchener-Waterloo—also from the students who are at the pharmacy school. I can tell you that these changes are really causing them concern as to the impact they're going to have on patients in the province of Ontario. I want to applaud them, and I just want to say that we want to make sure that there are no further cuts to front-line health care for the people in the province of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to speak on this motion. I want to highlight what is at the crux of the issue here; I think we need to focus back on the issue. The issue really is prices for drugs in the province of Ontario, which the people of Ontario pay. That is the issue here.

I had the opportunity to meet with many pharmacists, big and small, in my riding. I've been talking to them for some time about this particular issue and I've asked this question again and again of them: "Please explain to me why prices for drugs are so high in the province of Ontario." And there is no reasonable explanation for it.

1740

Of course, we very much accept the fact that the pharmacists provide a very valuable service. Absolutely. The issue is not pharmacists, the professionals. They are very much a critical part of our health delivery model. The issue is pharmacy, the business, that business model which is outdated and is resulting in huge costs for our health care system.

These professional allowances, from which bigger pharmacy companies benefit the most, are the ones which are escalating the prices for drugs which are paid by Ontarians. That is the issue which the government is trying to address by making these very important changes.

I want to clarify something else, and I speak to people who are watching this debate, because a lot has been said here today which muddies the water, which gives the impression that somehow the government, by making these changes, is cutting the Ontario drug benefit plan which is given to the people of Ontario. I want to make it very clear: That is not the case. Right now, the government of Ontario, through its drug benefits plan, pays for prescription drugs for 2.8 million Ontarians. That includes seniors, residents of long-term-care homes and homes for special care, social assistance and disability benefits recipients, and people who qualify under the Trillium drug program. The payment of those drugs for them is not being cut. I think we have to come very clean on that from all sides.

Right now, the province of Ontario is funding 4,000 brand and generic drugs through taxpayers' dollars. We need to make sure that we can add more drugs to the public list so that we can help Ontarians get those drugs at no price or at a reasonable price, at a lower price.

One of the issues I face, and I think all MPPs probably hear from constituents all the time on that issue, is when people are trying to access very expensive drugs to fight cancer and other life-threatening disease, to improve their quality of life, but somehow the government doesn't cover it under OHIP. Why? Because the government doesn't have the means to do so.

Putting an end to a practice like professional allowances, which is tantamount to kickbacks to pharmacy, the business, and which escalates the prices of drugs, enables the government to use those dollars to bring other drugs onto the public list so that we can provide them to Ontarians. That is the real issue.

We're not challenging what pharmacists do. We thank them for the services they provide. That is why—and this has been mentioned a few times in this House—pharmacists will be paid for the services they provide, because they're important services. That's why dollars are being put aside to compensate the pharmacists for the services they provide, because we want to make sure they continue to provide the services, which are very important for all Ontarians.

That is the crux of the issue: It's to reduce the prices of drugs, to make sure that the drug prices we pay in Ontario on the public side of the system—and those who are on private benefits or pay out of their pocket—are reasonable prices. That is why I will be voting against this particular motion.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. John Yakabuski: It certainly is a pleasure to join in this debate this afternoon. It has been a spirited debate. I think the member from Windsor got a little over the top here. She's taking this issue quite seriously; personally, I guess. However, she'll have to deal with that in her own way, in her own riding.

I tell you, I do know this much: The decision of this government to attack small rural pharmacists could be taken personally on their part. You know who else could take it personally? The seniors who are going to be affected by that.

I was at a meeting on the weekend and I asked the people in that audience, "Who has not gotten medical advice from their pharmacist?" And every one of them, in unison, said, "We all have." I said, "How many of you people have avoided a visit to your doctor or the emergency room as a result of a consultation with your pharmacist?" Again, the heads nod in unison.

You know, the government on one hand wants to convince the world that they're going to be saving a whole lot of money by attacking small independent pharmacists, but the reality is that it will be a pyrrhic victory at best, because the costs that will have to be borne by some other part of the health care system cannot be ignored. You can't just simply say that we're going to cut pharmacists and cut the amount that they receive in professional allowances—which the pharmacists are quite prepared to do, but they want real, genuine negotiation about how we get to the end, how we get to the point where we can offer the same kinds of services, no loss of services to seniors and the vulnerable people in our communities. We can get there. It doesn't have to be by a full frontal attack on the part of the government because they think they have a political issue that they can win on.

That's the only thing that motivates this government. If they believe they have an issue that they can be political winners on, then they want to take it on. The reality is that there are an awful lot of people getting caught up in the wake here.

It is important that this motion, as tabled in this House today, calls upon the government to sit down and have meaningful negotiations so that what we offer our seniors and those people most vulnerable in this province will be

the best possible outcome when it comes to health care being delivered and the costs being assumed by the taxpayer—that we'll be in the right place. It's time to sit down and start talking and stop attacking.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Hon. John Gerretsen: The one question that hasn't been answered by any of the opposition members of either party is why, in this province, we are paying anywhere between double and 22 times the price for generic drugs of any place in the States, in other provinces or what have you.

Now, I come from a family of four generations—and if I include my son, five generations—of independent business people. We know what it's like to meet a payroll and we know what it's like to meet expenses at the end of the day. I also realize that through the professional allowances—because we in effect have been paying too much for generic drugs compared to other jurisdictions—a lot of the money has been funnelled back through professional allowances, or kickbacks, as they themselves have labelled it in the newspaper just recently, to the pharmacists. I can well understand that for 30 or 40 years, a lot of these pharmacies have depended on that income. That may very well be the case. We simply want to make sure that the people of Ontario pay no more for generic drugs than people in other like jurisdictions.

Should the pharmacists be compensated for some of the additional services that we would like to have them perform in the future? Absolutely. It's with that in mind that \$150 million has been set aside to pay for those kinds of services, particularly in those rural areas where there may only be pharmacists. We don't want to see anybody go out of business. But we also don't want to see the people of Ontario, whether it's through the Ontario drug benefit plan or whether it's through their own pockets, pay up to 20 times more for generic drugs than anywhere else in the western world, and the opposition obviously doesn't want to talk about it. They want to view this as some sort of fight with patients, with this group or with that group. That's not what it's about. It's all about making sure that we in Ontario pay the right price for generic drugs. If that system has been around for 20 or 30 or 40 years, it is wrong. Yes, the pharmacists have to be compensated for the kind of medical advice, the kind of health care advice, that they are going to provide etc. Enough money has been set aside to make that happen. But the people of Ontario, through their own individual pocketbooks or through the various drug plans that the government pays for, should not be paying more for generic drugs than anywhere else in the western world. We've heard the numbers here, over and over again, for all sorts of drugs that we're currently doing that for.

I would just simply implore the people of Ontario to clearly understand that this is all about lowering the price of generic drugs that all of us at one time or another have

to take advantage of or need etc. That's what this is all about. It is not about attacking anybody. It's making sure that the dollars that are in the health care system can be utilized to the best advantage, and that does not include paying professional allowances to organizations so that they can meet their bottom line, as has been the case over the last 20 or 30 years.

This is the right thing to do, and I hope the members in the House will understand.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mrs. Elliott has moved opposition day number 2. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1751 to 1801.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Members take your seats, please.

Mrs. Elliott has moved opposition day number 2. All those in favour, please stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Barrett, Toby
Clark, Steve
Elliott, Christine
Gélinas, France
Hampton, Howard

Jones, Sylvia
Klees, Frank
MacLeod, Lisa
Martiniuk, Gerry
Miller, Norm
Munro, Julia
Murdoch, Bill

O'Toole, John
Savoline, Joyce
Shurman, Peter
Wilson, Jim
Witmer, Elizabeth
Yakabuski, John

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): All those opposed, please stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Aggelonitis, Sophia
Albanese, Laura
Arthurs, Wayne
Balkissoon, Bas
Bentley, Christopher
Best, Margaret
Bradley, James J.
Brotten, Laurel C.
Brown, Michael A.
Caplan, David
Chan, Michael
Chiarelli, Bob
Dickson, Joe
Flynn, Kevin Daniel

Fonseca, Peter
Gerretsen, John
Hoy, Pat
Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Johnson, Rick
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Leal, Jeff
Matthews, Deborah
Meilleur, Madeleine
Murray, Glen R.
Naqvi, Yasir
Oraziotti, David
Pendergast, Leeanna

Phillips, Gerry
Pupatello, Sandra
Ramal, Khalil
Ramsay, David
Rinaldi, Lou
Ruprecht, Tony
Sandals, Liz
Smith, Monique
Sousa, Charles
Van Bommel, Maria
Wilkinson, John
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 20; the nays are 41.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negatived.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): It being past 6 of the clock, this House is adjourned until 9 of the clock, Thursday, April 22.

The House adjourned at 1804.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Aggelonitis, Hon. / L'hon. Sophia (LIB)	Hamilton Mountain	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Arthurs, Wayne (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Samia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	Attorney General / Procureur général Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Broten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Caplan, David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Carroll, M. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism and Culture / Ministre du Tourisme et de la Culture
Chiarelli, Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Crozier, Bruce (LIB)	Essex	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (LIB)	Prince Edward–Hastings	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Energy and Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Énergie et de l'Infrastructure
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry / Ministre du Développement du Nord, des Mines et des Forêts
Hampton, Howard (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Hoy, Pat (LIB)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Johnson, Rick (LIB)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kormos, Peter (NDP)	Welland	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Kular, Kuldip (LIB)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Levac, Dave (LIB)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McMeekin, Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Hon. / L'hon. Carol (LIB)	Huron–Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Munro, Julia (PC)	York-Simcoe	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	
Murray, Glen R (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Orazietti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB)	Kitchener-Conestoga	
Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (LIB)	Elgin-Middlesex-London	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (LIB)	Scarborough-Agincourt	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches-East York	
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Economic Development and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London-Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland-Quinte West	
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Nipissing	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton-Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto-Danforth	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga-Erindale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	
Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Perth-Wellington	Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener-Waterloo	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Garfield Dunlop
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Robert Bailey
Robert Bailey, Gilles Bisson
Jim Brownell, Kim Craitor
Bob Delaney, Garfield Dunlop
Amrit Mangat, Phil McNeely
John O'Toole
Clerks / Greffiers: William Short (pro tem.), Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Pat Hoy
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laura Albanese
Laura Albanese, Wayne Arthurs
Toby Barrett, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Pat Hoy, Norm Miller
Glen R Murray, Charles Sousa
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: David Orazietti
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Helena Jaczek
Bob Chiarelli, Steve Clark
Helena Jaczek, Kuldip Kular
Dave Levac, Rosario Marchese
Bill Mauro, David Orazietti
Joyce Savoline
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Laura Albanese, Michael A. Brown
Donna H. Cansfield, M. Aileen Carroll
Howard Hampton, Ernie Hardeman
Lisa MacLeod, Leeanna Pendergast
Jim Wilson
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Ted Chudleigh
Mike Colle, Christine Elliott
Peter Kormos, Reza Moridi
Leeanna Pendergast, Lou Rinaldi
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Bas Balkissoon
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Yasir Naqvi
Bas Balkissoon, Bob Delaney
Joe Dickson, Sylvia Jones
Amrit Mangat, Norm Miller
Yasir Naqvi, Michael Prue
Mario Sergio
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Granum

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Norman W. Sterling
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Peter Shurman
M. Aileen Carroll, France Gélinas
Jerry J. Ouellette, David Ramsay
Liz Sandals, Peter Shurman
Norman W. Sterling, Maria Van Bommel
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Paul Miller
David Caplan, Kim Craitor
Jeff Leal, Gerry Martiniuk
Paul Miller, Bill Murdoch
Michael Prue, Lou Rinaldi
Tony Ruprecht
Clerks / Greffiers: Trevor Day (pro tem.), Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vic Dhillon
Vic Dhillon, Cheri DiNovo
Rick Johnson, Sylvia Jones
Jean-Marc Lalonde, Ted McMeekin
Shafiq Qadri, Khalil Ramal
Elizabeth Witmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions / Comité
spécial de la santé mentale et des dépendances**

Chair / Président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott
Bas Balkissoon, Christine Elliott
Kevin Daniel Flynn, France Gélinas
Helena Jaczek, Sylvia Jones
Jeff Leal, Liz Sandals
Maria Van Bommel
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mme France Gélinas	845
Mr. Kim Craiton	845
Mr. John O'Toole	845
Hon. Deborah Matthews	846
Mr. Steve Clark	846
Mr. Frank Klees	846
M. Jean-Marc Lalonde	846
The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier)	846

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

Bottle recycling	
Ms. Sylvia Jones	846
Event in Chatham–Kent–Essex	
Mr. Pat Hoy	846
Taxation	
Mr. John Yakabuski	847
Sault College	
Mr. David Oraziatti	847
Thousand Islands Accommodation Partners	
Mr. Steve Clark	847
Labour dispute	
Mme France Gélinas	848
Jer's Vision	
Mr. Yasir Naqvi	848
George Jeffrey Children's Centre	
Mr. Bill Mauro	848
Jack Yeilding	
Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn	848

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS / DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI

Defibrillator Access Act, 2010, Bill 41,	
Mr. McMeekin / Loi de 2010 sur l'accès aux	
défibrillateurs, projet de loi 41, M. McMeekin	
First reading agreed to	849
Mr. Ted McMeekin	849
Vince Kerrio	
Hon. Monique M. Smith	849
Mr. Kim Craiton	849
Hon. James J. Bradley	850
Mr. Tim Hudak	850
Ms. Cheri DiNovo	851
The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters)	851

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES / DÉCLARATIONS MINISTÉRIELLES ET RÉPONSES

Organ and tissue donation	
Hon. Deborah Matthews	852
Earth Day	
Hon. John Gerretsen	852
Organ and tissue donation	
Mrs. Christine Elliott	853
Mr. Frank Klees	853
Earth Day	
Mr. Toby Barrett	853
Mr. Peter Tabuns	854
Organ and tissue donation	
Ms. Cheri DiNovo	854
The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters)	854
Mr. Frank Klees	854

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Ontario pharmacists	
Mr. John Yakabuski	854
Taxation	
Mr. Yasir Naqvi	855
Ontario pharmacists	
Mr. Frank Klees	855
Full-day kindergarten	
Mr. Lou Rinaldi	855
Ontario pharmacists	
Mr. Bill Murdoch	856
Chronic pain clinics	
Ms. Cheri DiNovo	856
Taxation	
Mr. Reza Moridi	856
Ontario pharmacists	
Mrs. Julia Munro	856
Full-day kindergarten	
Mr. Pat Hoy	856
Ontario pharmacists	
Mr. Toby Barrett	857
Mental health services	
Mr. Bill Mauro	857
Ontario pharmacists	
Mr. John Yakabuski	857
Epilepsy	
Ms. Cheri DiNovo	857
Taxation	
Mr. Glen R. Murray	857

OPPOSITION DAY / JOUR DE L'OPPOSITION

Pharmacists

Mrs. Christine Elliott	858
Mr. Tim Hudak	859
Ms. Cheri DiNovo	860
Hon. Deborah Matthews	862
Mr. Frank Klees	863
Hon. Sandra Pupatello	863
Mrs. Julia Munro	865
Mr. Howard Hampton.....	865
Mr. David Zimmer.....	866
Mr. John O'Toole	867
Mr. Rick Johnson.....	868
Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer.....	868
Mr. Yasir Naqvi	869
Mr. John Yakabuski.....	869
Hon. John Gerretsen	870
Motion negatived	870

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Wednesday 21 April 2010 / Mercredi 21 avril 2010

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Full Day Early Learning Statute Law Amendment Act, 2010, Bill 242, Mrs. Dombrowsky / Loi de 2010 modifiant des lois en ce qui concerne l'apprentissage des jeunes enfants à temps plein, projet de loi 242, Mme Dombrowsky

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer	825
Mr. Rosario Marchese	828
Mr. Rick Johnson	828
Mr. John O'Toole	828
Mr. Michael Prue	829
Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer	829
Mr. Rosario Marchese	829
Third reading debate deemed adjourned	834

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mme France Gélinas	834
Hon. Christopher Bentley	834
Mrs. Joyce Savoline	834
Ms. Cheri DiNovo	834
Mr. Rick Johnson	834
Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn	834
Mr. Dave Levac	835
Hon. James J. Bradley	835
Hon. Dalton McGuinty	835
Mrs. Liz Sandals	835
Mr. Lou Rinaldi	835
The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters)	835
Wearing of ribbons	
Hon. Deborah Matthews	835

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Pharmacists

Mr. Tim Hudak	835
Hon. Dalton McGuinty	835

Pharmacists

Mr. Tim Hudak	836
Hon. Dalton McGuinty	836

Taxation

Mr. Howard Hampton	837
Hon. Dalton McGuinty	837

Public transit

Ms. Cheri DiNovo	837
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	838

Health care funding

Mrs. Christine Elliott	838
Hon. Deborah Matthews	838

Forest industry

Mr. Howard Hampton	839
Hon. Michael Gravelle	839

Diabetes treatment

Mr. Wayne Arthurs	840
Hon. Deborah Matthews	840

Curriculum

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer	840
Hon. Leona Dombrowsky	840

Labour dispute

Mme France Gélinas	841
Hon. Peter Fonseca	841

Victims of crime

Mrs. Liz Sandals	841
Hon. Christopher Bentley	841

Wind turbines

Mr. Ted Arnott	842
Hon. Dalton McGuinty	842
Ms. Sylvia Jones	842

Manufacturing jobs

Mr. Paul Miller	843
Hon. Sandra Pupatello	843

Doctors

Mr. Glen R. Murray	843
Hon. Deborah Matthews	843

Children's aid societies

Ms. Sylvia Jones	844
Hon. Laurel C. Broten	844

Anti-smoking programs

Mme France Gélinas	844
Hon. Margaret R. Best	844
Hon. John Wilkinson	845

DEFERRED VOTES / VOTES DIFFÉRÉS

Time allocation

Motion agreed to	845
------------------------	-----

Continued on inside back cover

X1
-92S
No. 20



Gouvernement
Publicat.
N° 20

ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Second Session, 39th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 39^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 22 April 2010

Jeudi 22 avril 2010



Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

<http://www.ontla.on.ca/>

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7410 or 325-3708.

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7410 ou le 325-3708.

Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services
Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



Service du Journal des débats et d'interprétation
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400; télécopieur, 416-325-7430
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

bookkeeper had gotten a notice from the company saying, "Your contract is about to expire;" and then further down in the letter, "If you don't get in touch with us, the contract will automatically be renewed for five years." The bookkeeper made a mistake. He wasn't used to contracts that renewed themselves in that fashion. He threw the letter out. The local business person was re-signed up against his will and was paying dramatically more for the gas in his office than I was paying in my constituency office.

These are companies that make their money by skimming off the top of people in this province. These are companies that make it very difficult to get out and charge people a lot of money to get out of these contracts, yet, as I will touch on later, make sure that their interests are well protected in their arrangements with consumers.

The core of this retail marketing of gas and electricity doesn't make sense for this province. It simply imposes a layer of bureaucracy on the energy consumers of this province that doesn't make their lives better, doesn't make energy more affordable and, in the end, undermines the well-being of our economy. There is no advantage to people paying for these contracts.

0910

We don't have the numbers before us today on the profits that are made by these retailers of electricity and gas, but it's hard for me to imagine that it's not a very lucrative business. I can tell you, from talking anecdotally to a former salesperson who was going door to door selling these contracts, that he made \$100 for each person he signed up. So if you're out there now watching the Legislature and you've signed one of these contracts, right off the top you have to pay \$100 that goes to that salesperson. That doesn't help you. It doesn't help you with your energy bill.

I was in London, Ontario, about a month ago and passed the office of Summitt Energy. They had a sign out front saying, "Jobs on offer. Make \$52,000 per year." I look at the numbers: at \$100 a contract, 10 contracts a week is \$1,000. That's two contracts a day for a five-day work week; I'm sure it's doable. There are people out there making \$40,000 to \$50,000 a year selling these contracts. But in the end, do they provide any value to this society? Do they actually increase our wealth? No. What they do is skim off this society. That's what is going on. It doesn't build the common wealth of this province.

When the minister first made his comments, he said that thousands of people are employed in these retailing operations, and he's right; there's no doubt about it. But I have to say that thousands, tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands could be employed putting in place energy-efficiency measures for homes, apartment buildings and commercial buildings. In fact, a study that was done a year ago showed that a million construction workers would be needed to retrofit houses right across Canada. It would generate a million person-years of employment. There, you actually create something that is worthwhile

for society. You're not just buying and selling. Buying and selling is a good thing, but you're not doing it solely as a way of extracting money from the population.

The minister's argument would have been just as strong in the United States or here in Canada when we were dealing with the private health insurance industry. Before medicare came in, before we had single-payer insurance, we had large competing bureaucracies selling health insurance. One could say, "Why shut down those large competing bureaucracies? People are employed." In the end, you make a decision to have a one-payer system so that you aren't wasting money. That's what we're doing here now. We are taking the labour of many thousands of people and using it unproductively, instead of actually reducing energy consumption the way we need to.

I have to say that I can see some value for people who want to pay a premium to ensure there is an investment made in green power. I might argue for a change in the business model, but I wouldn't block someone from actually making that contribution to society so that we accelerate the technological change, the transformation we have to go through. I can see that exception. But after that, this retailing of gas and electricity by these energy marketers is a waste of our society's wealth and time. However, getting rid of that practice is not what is on the table. What is on the table is a series of measures meant to further protect consumers from an irrational system. It's meant to protect people from excess.

As I said in my opening remarks, there is no doubt: I've talked to seniors who have been pushed very hard at their doors by salespeople who will not take no for an answer. As you probably have, Speaker—in fact, since you've been here a number of years, I have no doubt that you've done this—I have gone door to door through my riding, talked to a wide variety of people and encountered many people who are vulnerable, who are living in their homes, who are in a situation where their ability to fully grasp what is going on around them is more limited than it used to be and who are vulnerable to high-pressure salespeople who come to their doors.

I referred to a salesperson that I talked to earlier who made \$100 each time he sold one of these retail contracts. Well, the other thing that person had to say to me was that he learned very quickly that if he spent half an hour explaining to people how these contracts worked, no one would buy. They would just say, "No, thanks. Now I understand. You're asking me to pay this big premium so that I won't have a volatile energy price some time in the future. I'm willing to pay a lower price now and take my chances later." He said, "Don't do that. Don't spend half an hour talking to people. They won't buy. Just get them to sign."

I've talked to my constituents who have asked those people at the door, "Who are you? Are you?"—in this case—"from Toronto Hydro?" In Hamilton, "Are you from the local utility?" And they say, "No, we're the people who provide the power to the utilities." From the testimony we got in committee, these retailers buy their

electricity from generators, and that is the source of the power they're paying for in the system. They don't supply the power to the local utilities. That is not true.

In the course of clause-by-clause debate, I moved that we stop this door-to-door sales process. I have to say that, in practical terms, this would mean these companies could market on the Internet, they could do telemarketing, they could set up booths at shopping malls—all kinds of things like that. But their ability to get at the vulnerable and to get at their utility bills, take them and take down the numbers would be eliminated.

The failure to pass that amendment is a substantial problem, because I believe that the bulk of this business relies on high-pressure sales to the vulnerable and to those who are at a disadvantage. And if these companies continue to sell door to door, even with what is put in place, you can expect that we will continue to get an on-going litany of complaints about abuses.

In this case, strangely enough, I hope I'm wrong. I hope it's successful. I hope I have misread it. The reality is that if these safeguards are effective, most of these companies will not be able to function, because they live on high-pressure sales. If the government is wrong and these companies continue their high-pressure tactics, we'll be back here debating this again, because the people of this province don't want to have to deal with con artists.

I use the phrase "con artists" because people do get conned. My guess is that there are people out there who are selling this who are straightforward. But there are a lot of con artists, and that means that they get done in. They will be looking for a way around whatever rule has been put forward, and that will cause substantial problems for all of us.

I want to just read this into the record from an official notice—a media release—of the Ontario Energy Board, April 1, 2010: "OEB Imposes Conditions on Renewal of Universal Energy Gas Marketer Licence." You should know that Universal Energy, now owned by Just Energy, is a company whose marketing practices were such that the Ontario Energy Board wouldn't give them a five-year renewal of their licence; it gave them a two-year renewal of their licence. There were a lot of complaints about their operations—justified complaints, apparently. So you out there who are watching this debate should remember the name Universal Energy/Just Energy. This company is one that has been put on watch by the Ontario Energy Board.

0920

In the course of the hearings about these companies, we had a presentation by Councillor Maurice McMillan, ward 2, from the city of Orillia. He had Orillia Power do an analysis of the cost to consumers of being on the RPP, regulated power plan; the power provided by Orillia Power, the local utility; and the power that was purchased through one of these retailers. I'm not going to go through all the lines, but the bottom line is that it cost substantially more—\$75 more—for those on the retail marketing company's system. They got stuck with a higher

power bill. That's the reality. For those of you who have a retailer at the door, remember this: You will be paying more. You will take a hit. This is something that is going on in this province, is not curbed in the way that it needs to be curbed and, frankly, is a problem that I think will come back to this Legislature.

All that said, generally speaking, I'd vote for measures to limit these retailers more. If this bill was only to do with those retailers, I'd vote for it reluctantly but vote for it and press for stronger measures.

The more problematic part of the bill has to do with sub-metering in apartment buildings. Most of the protections that are supposed to be in this bill are dependent on the regulations. Those haven't been drafted, so it's very difficult for those who want to criticize the bill to actually fully know what's on the table, what will be there to actually protect tenants or not protect tenants. The reality, in my opinion, is that the government should not proceed with sub-metering in multi-residential apartment buildings, and I'll talk to the economic and environmental rationale for that. They should not proceed with smart metering in these multi-unit buildings.

I believe that conservation and demand management programs for landlords and tenants are what's really needed if we're going to deal with energy consumption in multi-unit buildings. Insulation programs; solar heating and hot water programs that are cost-competitive with electricity and gas; and education and social marketing, targeted at landlords and tenants, are the kinds of programs that are needed to actually make a difference.

The current government initiative to expand smart metering into the multi-unit residential sector won't meet the overall energy conservation goals that this province requires. Given that the government seems to be going forward with it—it still has regulations to write—it should be seriously considering a low-income rate assistance program, a publicly funded multi-residential conservation program and placing an onus on the landlords to apply to the Landlord and Tenant Board for permission to install suite meters, subject to meeting stringent requirements. The burden shouldn't be placed on tenants to apply for rent decreases after the fact.

The larger context that we're dealing with when it comes to electricity prices is that this Liberal government has made substantial mistakes in its decisions around energy policy. As much as it talks about the Green Energy Act, an act that I voted for, the bulk of what it's investing in is nuclear power and gas-fired power. Those are very expensive options. Investment in those options also means increased investment in transmission lines, a very expensive option.

Not just tenants but homeowners are having to deal with higher and higher bills because decisions have been made around electricity investment, hydro investment, that are not the least-cost, environmentally sound options, but in fact very expensive options that are not helpful to the environment.

Under the current system of vacancy decontrol, there's no reason to believe that shifting the burden of costs from

landlords to tenants will result in lower rents, particularly when you have a vacancy. When a unit is vacant, no tenant has to be asked their permission to have a meter put in. You can expect that those meters will be put in each and every time that a unit is vacated. The future tenants will have to deal with the consequences of that.

Tenants could face rent hikes due to landlord applications for above-guideline increases for retrofit work. That will affect the ongoing affordability of rental stock, particularly in large urban centres. Tenants will be forced to pay for electricity service directly, without any control over the factors which could reduce bills, such as the quality of appliances or the building envelope.

I've had the opportunity to be a property manager. I've dealt with buildings that were very old; I've dealt with buildings that were fairly modern. The reality is that two thirds of people's energy costs relate to heating and cooling on the one side—temperature conditioning—and hot water. That's two thirds of the cost. If you are in a building that is inadequately insulated, that is leaky, has a lot of cold air flowing in in the winter or cool air flowing out in the summer, then you are going to have substantial problems with keeping yourself comfortable in that unit. If you are in a high-rise building and you don't have either the legal authority or the money to put in proper double- or triple-glazed windows, if you don't have the money to put in place the insulation that is required—and frankly, you couldn't do it; legally, you don't have the right—then your ability to influence two thirds of your energy bill is not there. You are stuck.

What this bill assumes is that every unit is identical, every unit has the same services, every unit has the same kinds of walls and windows, and it's just simply a question of tenants behaving badly or behaving well. But that is not the reality. Landlords control the factors which have the greatest impact on the actual temperature in units. Landlords decide what kind of appliances—stoves and refrigerators—they put into units. I know in this bill there's mention of setting the energy standard for those appliances. Will it be set at the highest current standard and adjusted as those standards rise? I want to see that, and I want to know if it will be enforced, because there is a huge problem with lack of enforcement.

The way your building is oriented will determine whether you are very hot in the summer, or cool; very cold in the winter, or warmer. I've lived in a high-rise in this city on Broadview Avenue that had a north-south orientation. The units on the west face getting the west sun in midsummer were incredibly hot. In winter, they were the warmer units. Units on both sides of the building had the same single-pane glazing that leaked air around the frames.

Under this legislation, tenants in buildings where there is a substantial temperature difference from one side of the building to the other are all going to get hit with the cost of the energy and will have no ability to correct the fundamental problems, and the landlords will no longer have an incentive to act because the bulk of the energy costs will be out of their hands, will not be a concern for

them. And frankly, if they were to act, they wouldn't be able to reap the savings. So this in fact undermines the incentive for landlords to act and puts us in a situation in these buildings where we are going to have far more problems in the future getting action. These multi-unit buildings in Ontario, many of which were built in the 1960s and 1970s, are what an energy analyst friend of mine called energy pigs. They were built relatively inexpensively. They radiate a lot of heat. They were not built to conserve energy.

0930

So when Mayor Miller of Toronto came forward with his plan for modernizing apartment buildings around Toronto and did a calculation of the energy savings that it would generate, his numbers were very big. The energy savings would pay for the retrofits. That program will be far less attractive to landlords under this regime.

I want to speak briefly about findings in the United States on these matters. The housing and urban development department in the United States did a study a few years ago looking at the impact of different measures on energy consumption in their buildings. That study found that at core, having the tenants pay for their electricity and heating didn't change the amount of energy consumed in those buildings. So a publicly owned piece of housing stock in one city, where the tenants paid all their energy costs, and a publicly owned building in another city, where the owner paid all the energy costs, had pretty much the same energy consumption.

What they found when they did their analysis was that the big difference was between multiple-unit dwellings and single-family dwellings—a big difference there. Far less energy is consumed in a multi-unit building because you've got buildings that have units around them. If you've got neighbours on either side of you and above and below, you're not going to be radiating energy out. You've got your energy radiating out into other units.

They looked at the age of buildings. The older a building was, the more it leaked energy and the more the energy costs went up.

So if we put in meters for these tenants, those who live in old buildings will get hit hard; those in new buildings, much less hard. But it is not going to solve the fundamental problem, and that's what came up in that study as well: You need to invest in actually making the buildings energy efficient if you want to cut their operating costs, their energy costs. That's the key and that's the centre of it.

The other thing I want to speak to is the reality that this initiative now opens tenants up to having smart meters installed. There are a few things that I want to touch on here. On January 7 in the *Toronto Sun*, Jonathan Jenkins reported: "Meters Prove Not So Smart," talking about the installation and the operation of smart meters in Toronto by Toronto Hydro. He writes: "They promised smart would be cheap, but so far it's proving more expensive."

"Most Toronto Hydro customers who've been on smart meters and time-of-use pricing the longest have actually seen an increase of up to \$3 per month."

"The cost of the meter itself also adds an extra \$3-\$4 a month to local utility bills."

That's important, because there is a mass initiative to move forward on these meters, and frankly, they are not going to give the kinds of savings that the government has trumpeted. I have some other notes that I'll cite on that. But what it will mean for tenants is they're going to have more difficulties in making ends meet.

In the course of the clause-by-clause debate, I actually sat down, called Toronto Hydro, looked at the bills of tenants. When you do the calculation—Toronto Hydro says it costs about \$3 to \$4 a month to run a meter. The meters cost \$500 installed. I did a very rough calculation, saying 5% interest over 10 years to amortize the meters, so \$1 to \$2. So it was about 5 bucks a month for that new sub-meter in an apartment building that a tenant will have to pay.

If a tenant isn't paying for their heating and hot water on their electricity bill, their bill is in the \$30- to \$36-a-month range. Well, \$6 is about 15% of the value of that electricity bill. They would have to save a lot of electricity just to pay for the meter itself—the meter and the monitoring of that meter. In the end, the tenants would get virtually no benefit and, frankly, only one third of the electricity cost in that apartment would be accessible to the tenants' ability to reduce their costs. They're imposing this cost on tenants with very little potential that the tenant will actually be able to do anything but pay for the meter.

I'll go back to smart meters. Jonathan Jenkins reports:

"Toronto Hydro found the actual difference in smart meter bills—up or down—is quite small.

"For 72% who saw their bills rise, the average monthly increase was 90 cents.

"For the roughly 27% who saw decreases, the average was 29 cents per month."

Why is that? Why is it that people aren't saving a fortune when they get to do these things, when they get to shift their bills around?

I took an opportunity to print off Toronto Hydro's graph showing what people pay in what segments of the day. For the winter rates, the peak times, when you pay most, are 7 to 11 in the morning and 5 to 9 at night. I have to say to you, if you get up at 7 in the morning and you have a shower, if you have electric hot water; if you make toast and, if it's winter, you make some hot cereal, you have a coffee, then it is very difficult for you to avoid having an increased electricity cost. If you, as I do, turn the heat down overnight and you turn it up when you get up in the morning, something that has been recommended for a long time, then you get hit in that peak period. That's a situation where people's choices are relatively limited—they want to have a hot breakfast; they want to be warm; they want to have the lights on when they wake up—so they're going to get hit with that peak period.

Then from 5 to 9: You get home, say, between 5 and 6 in the evening, you have dinner to make and you've got kids who come home. Are you going to keep the lights

off in mid-winter when it's dark? Are you not going to have the radio or television on? Are you not going to cook? The reality is that people are being hit with costs at their peak time of need for electricity. This isn't a time when everyone is sleeping; this is when they live their lives at home. They don't actually find themselves in a position where they can cut an awful lot of their activities, which is why, and I'll go on to this in another study, people don't save a lot on these meters, because their fundamental demands and needs come up at these peak times. That's of consequence.

The other peak period is in the summer, and that's from noon until 5 p.m. I can actually see where people who go to work during the day can turn down their air conditioning and turn it up again when they come home at night. But I have to say to you, Speaker—and others in this House may have had this experience if they've dealt with people who are at home with their kids through the day—if you're at home with two toddlers through the day, you're not going to have the house cold in the winter and you're not going to have it really hot in the summer. If you've got two or three kids in the house, you're going to look after them, and you're going to take a hit on your hydro costs. If you're a senior and your health requires that you keep your temperature at something that's comfortable, then you know what? You're going to be in the house and you're going to turn on that air conditioner even though you're paying peak price.

0940

The term in economists' language is "elasticity." People don't have a lot of options for moving away from those costs. They absorb them, they take a hit, which is why these meters don't save an awful lot, although the amount of money that we put into them is somewhere in the range—since I've heard two ranges, I'll quote both—of \$600 million to \$1 billion. That's a lot of money to spend on something where people's options are fairly limited. For \$600 million to \$1 billion, you can do an awful lot of energy efficiency in this province. You can use that kind of money to lease high-efficiency appliances, to lease solar hot water heaters, to actually finance an awful lot of changes that would cut people's living costs. But instead we've spent \$600 million to \$1 billion on the meters whose impact is relatively small because the options people have at the times when they're getting hit are so limited.

This Liberal government had a study done by a fairly well-respected company, Navigant. They did a study in—it looks like 2007—on smart meters and the impact of those on residential load. Remember, we are spending \$600 million to \$1 billion, and their calculation was that the reduction in demand would be about 300 megawatts from peak. I have to tell you, for energy efficiency that's a very expensive investment. That is an extremely expensive investment. For a program that touches every household in this province, that is a very low rate of return. That isn't what we want to see. And yet tenants will be exposed to that in its full glory, and they will struggle with those bills. And like many members is this House, I

suspect that we all will be dealing with the phone calls and the emails of people who are dealing with energy bills that are problematic.

A report I have here called *Advanced Metering Infrastructure—Implications for Residential Customers in New Jersey*, produced for the New Jersey Department of Public Advocate, is an important study. It's an out-of-Ontario study looking at the impact of smart meters in other jurisdictions. Are they economic? Are they useful? Are they producing savings greater than the cost of generating power? Because really, for most energy efficiency measures, that's cheaper than the combined cost of distribution and generation. So when you do energy efficiency, it's to avoid the cost of generation and new distribution and transmission lines.

Their experience, and this is their review of utilities making filings to regulatory bodies in the United States, is that "The AMI filings"—we use the term smart meters—"of utilities in other states, and the studies prepared by New Jersey EDCs"—electricity distribution companies—"indicate the total cost of AMI, measured as the net present value of revenue requirements over 15 years, would be greater than the NPV of forecast savings in utility operating costs over the same period." Breaking that down, smart meters are more expensive than generation and distribution. That is a very expensive energy efficiency measure—very expensive.

They say that "utilities who invest in AMI"—smart meters—"will eventually file for an increase in the distribution service rates in order to recover that shortfall." In other words, unlike almost all other energy efficiency measures that are popular and have been promoted by utilities around North America, this is one where it's costing more than generation and distribution. This is an expensive option, and yet we've gone into it whole hog and we're about to extend it to tenants who will not be that grateful for this particular tender of mercy visited upon them.

They talk about the experience in the test programs for these smart meters and say that the expected reductions are based on three major assumptions: reduction in peak use for participating customers; percentage of customers who will voluntarily participate; and long-term persistence of the reductions per participating customer. They note that many of the people who took part in the initial trials were given appreciation payments, and thus there is a skewing of the numbers that would come out of that. They say that because these meters have only been in for a few years, it is very difficult to say whether people would actually keep to the changes that were projected.

Their conclusion: "Utility investments in AMI," or smart meters, as we say, "are not the least-cost approach to reducing the annual energy use of residential customers in New Jersey, or the bills and air emissions associated with that annual energy use." Well, do you know what? I think they're right. It seems to be the experience with Toronto Hydro so far. In their recommendation to the regulatory bodies, they say, "Are there alternatives to smart meters?" They say yes: "Other utilities have invest-

ed in load control and supporting infrastructure for only those circuits where such investments are clearly cost-effective."

In this province, all the time we have situations where systems and distribution lines are overloaded. You have a choice: You can run another power line over somebody's property, or you can invest at the end point in reducing demand. There are those in this House who have rights of way on their property, who understand exactly what I'm talking about. It is cheaper for us to look at the system and pick out the areas where strategically we get the best bang for our buck. That isn't what we have here. That is not what is being visited upon the tenants of this province.

In the end, we have before us a bill that advances a strategy that will be very costly to tenants. We have a strategy that will undermine the financial incentive for landlords to invest in energy efficiency in their buildings. We have a setup for higher electricity bills all around, without the advantage to society or individuals that we need to have from every investment we make. We're a rich society, but we're not a society that can afford to throw away \$600 million to \$1 billion on these kinds of investments. I am going to urge people, even though there are some useful things in the first half of this bill, to vote against the bill because of the substantial weaknesses, the retrograde reality of the second half of the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mr. Dave Levac: Contrary to my comments before we started, I did pay attention to the member from Toronto—Danforth. I always listen to the member from Toronto—Danforth in his delivery of speeches in this House. I want to thank him for his blunt response to the bill and his participation in the committee.

There are so many things I could go over; let me do it very quickly. The retailers, the suite metering and the deposits and disconnects: There are going to be three ways to cancel contracts: there's the 10-day cooling-off period; there's the third-party verification within 10 and 60 days; and there are 30 days—a full 30 days—after receiving your first bill that you are allowed to cancel the contract. We believe we've found a balance when it comes to retailing at the door. The member believes that we should be banning it altogether. That is not an option that did not get considered. That's a double negative, so let me put it this way: It was considered, and the agencies know that. We think we've found a balance to make sure that that gets cleaned up. If it doesn't, there are other options, and the member is right: we will evaluate that.

What we're also doing is clearly defining the few issues. Deposits and disconnecting: We're defining that when the salesperson is at the door, they immediately must verbally identify themselves and disclose who they are and who they're working for; they need ID badges; they also need training and standards that the industry must provide; and plain language in contracts, in various languages. So we're looking at all of the avenues that we

can correct to make sure that those people at the door are protected as consumers, and all members from all sides of the House agreed that consumer protection was the issue.

Accountability of retailers and the OEB random audits of the retailers: There is going to be even more expectation that they improve.

Regulations in writing: The consultations on the regulation-writing is taking place next year within the year, and we hope we can cover off an awful lot of the issues the member is concerned about.

0950

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd just like to commend the member from Danforth. He did his homework and obviously sits on the committee and had a lot of good input.

I must say that there are a lot of good things in the bill, and any kind of bill like this was long overdue. The consumer abuse that was going on out there was a real tragedy. But as my fellow member stated, it doesn't go quite far enough. Some of the things in the bill maybe have a negative impact for people who, like he stated, are staying at home at peak times with kids in the winter and summer, and will be utilizing their equipment during those hours. I don't think it will be beneficial to stay-at-home moms and the elderly. They will be at home all day long a lot of times, and some of them are house-bound. As you get older, some people require a little more heat. The system is not quite what it was and you require a little more warmth. I know that when my grandparents got older, they liked it a little warmer. It was almost like a steam bath when I went in their house sometimes. It was pretty warm. So I can imagine, or I don't want to imagine, what their hydro bill will be like or their utility costs, because I think it'll be—it's not as if our seniors don't have enough to deal with, with their fixed incomes, and I think this will be just an additional burden for them.

I don't think this has been thought out well enough. I think there are certain groups in our society that will benefit from it, and there are many groups that won't. I think that more input from the public and user groups would have been a good thing to do. So I can safely say that we will probably not be supporting it because it doesn't go far enough.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Seeing none, the honourable member for Toronto-Danforth has up to two minutes for his response.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thanks to the members for Brant and Hamilton East-Stoney Creek for listening and for commenting.

I appreciate that, in fact, consideration was given to shutting down the door-to-door sales by these retailers, but I'm sorry that you didn't come to the conclusion that you were going to do it. I think it would have been a very good step.

I want to say to you, Speaker, that this should be a very clear message to the energy retailers that they are

starting to build a political consensus in this province that we are not happy with their operations and that if this comes to the House the next time, there is a very good chance that they will be dispatched, because there is only so much abuse that the public can take. They take a fair amount. It takes a lot to rile them. They have a lot on their minds, but having people come to their doors, aggressively harassing them for their utility bill, and in some cases—and we know it's true because companies have been charged and convicted—actually having signatures forged for contracts.

It's clear that the Ontario Energy Board was not happy with Universal Energy when they gave them a limited renewal, not five years or two years. It's clear that these sorts of practices are hugely problematic both for us as legislators but for the citizens of this province who deserve far better than this. I hope, although I don't believe, that these measures substantially curtail those abuses.

When it comes to tenants, I don't believe that what's in this bill and the direction that's being taken are going to help the environment. That's a huge problem. Beyond that, it will hurt tenants, and for that reason alone we won't be supporting this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'm pleased to rise and join the debate today on Bill 235, an act respecting energy retailers, An Act to enact the Energy Consumer Protection Act, 2010 and to amend other Acts.

Since I was first elected in 2007, I have received countless visits and phone calls from my constituents regarding energy retailers. Many of these retailers will be affected by this bill. In fact, my constituency office in Sarnia is often spending hours out of their day assisting the people of Sarnia-Lambton in regard to energy contracts they have signed at their home and at the door.

Recently, I wrote a column that appeared in one of our local weekly periodicals. It was titled, "Do You Know Who's Knocking at Your Door?" In it, I listed a number of issues that are concerns in Sarnia-Lambton. I won't go into them today. Many of the members in this House have heard me speak about them—I won't say ad nauseam but at length from time to time. I won't say what they are. They don't have anything to do with this energy bill.

"But, each week"—I'm quoting myself here—"without fail, my office in Sarnia receives your phone calls, letters and visits in regard to the occasional dodgy business practices and, frankly, unfair contracts which have been signed with door-to-door energy retailers.

"Many of us know these 'energy retailers' as their agents have knocked at our doors and asked to see our energy bills, almost always promising a better deal. I have heard many accounts from constituents who were under the false impressions that these agents arrived at their door representing these local energy utilities, such as Union Gas or Bluewater Power," which was not the case.

"These energy retailers promise 'flat-rate plans' and 'price protection' which will stabilize" my constituents'

“energy rates for a specific period; however, they are not always such a good deal.” In fact, it was often found after the fact when these constituents would present themselves at my office, that they had in fact been “locked into three-or-five year plans at rates which would force them to pay up to twice as much as they would have been charged by the standard local utility! Moreover, what they don’t tell you is that if you to cancel the contract, you could be penalized with a cancellation fee of up to \$1,500 or more.”

Our office worked with a number of these constituents to reverse these contracts and remedy these situations. That’s why I am pleased to rise today after many years of pushing this government to act. The government has finally agreed to introduce a bill which will significantly change how energy retailers do business in this province.

Though this bill is more than two years’ overdue, it would prohibit many of the current unfair practices taking place. It would simplify the wording in energy contracts and set down firm rules regarding your ability to cancel contracts with retailers, and it’s about time.

In fact, I’m confident when I say that I know there’s not a single member of this House who hasn’t had some contact with a consumer who has a horror story to tell about an energy retailer or representative of an energy retailer who has come to their door and, thereafter, constituents have come to their office. In fact, in many cases, they can absolutely prove that there was misrepresentation on the part of that agent, which makes it quite clear that it is about time that something was done about this. Whenever there is an environment in sales where people are going to the door and are clearly misrepresenting themselves by saying things that they have no right to say or promising things that are completely untrue, it must be stopped.

However, at the same time, while I do support the reasons behind bringing forth this legislation to protect consumers, I’m a little concerned about the way it’s being done. In fact, from what I recall, this bill seems awfully similar to a private member’s bill brought forth by the member for—David Ramsay—

Mr. Jeff Leal: Great member.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yeah, a great member—in November 2008. Timiskaming—the member for Timiskaming. I apologize.

So I ask, if this government believes protecting consumers is a good idea today, why wasn’t it a good idea in November 2008? It’s just a thought.

As my caucus colleague our energy critic previously stated, the exposé that was presented on CBC’s Marketplace early in 2009 was obviously a wake-up call for this government and for anybody who didn’t think there were problems going on in the energy retailing business. These problems needed to be addressed, and I believe that Mr. Ramsay’s bill would have partially done that over a year ago, so I think they’re a little late to the game.

My question is, why did the Minister of Energy—at that time, Minister Smitherman—take so long to react

and bring in a piece of obviously good legislation that should have been done a long time ago?

Now, there’s clearly a need for this protection, but there are definitely some issues with this legislation as well. The member for Timiskaming’s bill would have prohibited retailers from entering into contracts with consumers other than those whose names appear on a bill. It would have required the retailer to provide a written copy of the contract and a reaffirmation letter with specific required information, including the price to be paid to the retailer versus the utility. It should also state clearly the terms of the contract and other relevant information.

The bill also made it quite clear that he had reached out not only to us but to members of the third party and to industry representatives like the Ontario Energy Association and discovered many ways to improve the bill. I am worried that in the drafting of this bill the same consultations have not been done. Moreover, I worry about the place that the Ontario Energy Board has been put in with this bill. If you want to ensure that there’s protection—and I support the premise behind the legislation absolutely—why has the Ontario Energy Board been pushed to the back burner? We already have an Ontario Energy Board which could have been given more teeth for enforcement, but instead it seems that this bill largely avoids working with them.

What I can agree with is this: Will the energy consumer be better off at the end of the day when this legislation is passed than before? Absolutely. Absolutely, the energy consumer, the customer at the door, my constituent, your constituent is going to be better off. We’ve been encouraging the government to bring forth such legislation that would do just that, but at the same time, my concerns with the positioning of the Ontario Energy Board and the government’s seeming lack of consultation with the major players involved in this industry still stand. Again I ask, if this government believes that protecting consumers is a good idea today, in April 2010, why wasn’t it a good idea in November 2008?

By the time this bill is implemented, I would ask the members watching today and the audience to ask yourselves how many consumers and constituents of ours would have been protected over the last year and a half if the government had acted in the autumn of 2008 rather than sitting on their hands for over a year.

Thank you again for the opportunity to rise and speak in support of this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments? Further debate?

Seeing none, Mr. Duguid has moved third reading of Bill 235. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I didn’t hear the no. I’m sorry.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Orders of the day?

Hon. Gerry Phillips: No further business.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): There being no further business, this House stands in recess until 10:30, at which time we will have question period.

The House recessed from 1003 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I'm pleased to give welcome this morning to the United Nations in Canada group and the UNA youth, who are here to promote the Ripple Effect, their water protection and conservation statement, for Earth Day. They are: from Hamilton, Deanne Durward, Jacob Houpt, Kai Fan and Si Chen; from Walkerton, Katie Schaefer and Braden Weltz; from Quinte, Phil Armstrong, Subhi Kurban and Benisha Kaur; along with regional coordinator Barry Randall and UNA Canada staff and volunteers Dagna Pielaszkiwicz, Rehana Tejpar and Georgina Bencsik. Welcome, one and all.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Just to follow up on the previous member, in the members' east gallery today we also have some other individuals with the United Nations Association in Canada. We have Hilary Pearson, who is on the national board of directors, and Georgina Bencsik from the United Nations Association in Canada, Toronto regional branch. We have UNA Canada's Ripple Effect Ontario participants: from Ripple Effect Peterborough, Sam Morrell; from Youth4Water Toronto, Jae Hong Kim, Pia Johnson, Zahrah Munas, Shiré Brandi and Ameera McIntosh. We certainly welcome them today.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: In the east gallery, I'd like to introduce my LA Melanie Wright's family, who are with us here today visiting from Quebec: her mom, Nancy Wright, and her boyfriend, Andrew Sainsbury.

Mr. Paul Miller: I would like to introduce two friends who are visiting from the great riding of Hamilton East-Stoney Creek: Mary DiBacco and Angela Cansee.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'd like to introduce some very special guests who are with us today: Mike Duncan and Jean Stilwell, the co-hosts of Good Day GTA on my favourite radio station, Classical 96.3. Please welcome them.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: On April 23, the people of the Republic of Turkey will be celebrating International Children's Day. Therefore, in the gallery to help us celebrate this as well—and every member will receive an invitation for Sunday to attend a very special International Children's Day event put on by the Turkish federation of Canada—I have the pleasure to introduce to you the new Consul General of the Republic of Turkey, Mr. Mustafa Bilgen; the president of the Federation of Canadian Turkish Associations, Mehmet Bor; the former chief of building, city of Toronto, Yaman Uzumeri; the vice-president of the FCTA, Mr. Ismail Vataner; the president of the Turkish Culture and Folklore Society, Gelal Uçar; the director of the Turkish Federation Com-

munity Foundation of Canada, Yildiz Ünsal; and the president of the ITU Alumni Association of Canada, Ahmet Gökgez. Welcome.

Mr. Michael Prue: It's my privilege and honour to introduce two guests who are here today, Maxine and Jim Caron, who are here to observe this fine Legislature and all the carryings-on that go on.

Mr. Reza Moridi: It's my pleasure to welcome my friends Ms. Shayesteh Mahdi and Mr. Amir Ghiassi.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, I might as well join the gang. I'd like to introduce Roger Sigouin, mayor of Hearst, who's here with a delegation from the community of Hearst.

INTEGRITY COMMISSIONER

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that I have laid upon the table a copy of an order in council appointing Lynn Morrison as Integrity Commissioner commencing April 13, 2010.

ORAL QUESTIONS

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is for the Acting Premier. Premier McGuinty gagged a family he allowed to be terrorized in Caledonia from saying how much he paid in hush money. He placed a gag order on Carillion Canada, blocking them from telling the public how the McGuinty Liberals made a mess of the bidding process for redevelopment of service centres. He's put a gag order on mom-and-pop pharmacy operations to block them from telling patients and seniors the alternatives they've offered to save money while avoiding cuts to front-line health care under the Liberals' strong-arm plan. What makes the Premier think he can get away with gagging his opponents?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: It's very difficult to understand, and perhaps in the supplementary we'll know what the direction of the question is. Let me just say that if these are supposed attempts at gagging, they clearly haven't done very well, have they? Because people with the Ontario government—we have an open-door policy to actually talk to our stakeholders on a regular basis. We engage our stakeholders, whether they're business, individuals or associations representing the people of Ontario. We have a long-standing policy. Even with our association of municipalities, we actually created a law to mandate consultation, something that your government refused to do and voted against during our initiative.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Here's the direction of the question: A pattern has developed where Premier McGuinty is caught doing anything he can to avoid accountability. He was caught using the budget bill to cover up his breaking the law by cancelling a public review of the

wasteful local health integration networks. He tried to bury a \$53-million energy tax on electricity bills. He refuses to release details on the deals he made for 40 US clinics and hospitals to be preferred providers of American health care to Ontario patients. He told Ontario families he banned untendered contracts, but then he was caught handing out deals to run the Windsor Energy Centre and Casino Niagara, and for consultants at LHINs. Is this pattern of behaviour a bad habit or is it indicative of something else?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I just want to give a little “that was then, this is now” history. Unlike this member opposite, I was here in this House watching when your party was the government and we had to go digging to find that your Minister of Energy, through an energy agency of the government, took a trip with his family to Euro Disney and hid the expenses. That is the kind of outrage that we, the public, watched in your government. In this government, you can go online and review what it is we’re doing. In this government, the only reason that the public has an opportunity to argue, complain, debate or support is because this government makes the information available publicly. When that legislation came forward, this official opposition—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. Final supplementary.

1040

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Mr. Speaker, I would say to the Acting Premier, through you, of course, that this is a government that wants to talk about accountability, but then they go around and do something exactly opposite. This is rubbing off on other Liberal cabinet ministers.

The health minister said her contract with McKinsey and Co., the details of which of course are secret, is for \$750,000, but the Sudbury hospital admits you are diverting even more of their budget to pay for this untendered contract. The infrastructure minister and the Minister of Transportation ran the dubious bidding process for renewal of service centres. The labour minister cut his own side deal to send WSIB workers to the US for American health care. His entire caucus is trying to block the re-appointment of the Environmental Commissioner and the Ombudsman.

This government is not in favour of accountability. What makes you think you can get away with pretending that you are?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: There are a few of us that were here back in the day. Your party, which you’re speaking for today, is the same group that sent the then trade minister on a European tour with Bacardi rum and Andy Brandt, and hid the expenses through the LCBO. We’ve changed that rule now in Ontario, and the only reason I’m so surprised you’d ask the question today is that you voted against our law to make that kind of expense public.

It’s very ironic that today we’re faced with questions when we’ve seen legendary openness in government and transparency. All you have to do is move the mouse and

click, and you have access to virtually everything that we’re doing. That’s how you can even find a question every now and then that’s relevant—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I realize it is Thursday and members are anxious to get back to their constituencies, but we collectively within this House have work to do. Part of that is question period, and I’m having extreme difficulty in hearing members either ask questions or answer questions. I’m sure all of our guests that are here today would like to hear them as well.

CURRICULUM

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Again, my question is for the Acting Premier. Premier McGuinty was also caught trying to slip through changes to the school curriculum so that, beginning in September, sex education will be taught to six-year-olds in grade 1. Parents are already coming forward and telling us that they weren’t consulted, Catholic school boards are saying they won’t implement the new curriculum, and the only ones who knew you were doing were so-called experts and Toronto advisers.

What made you think you could get away with cutting parents out of a decision about their own kids?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I am very pleased to have an opportunity to correct a record that is so clearly laid out incorrectly today in this House. This process started two years ago. This is important to the Ontario government, which has the best Ministry of Education in the world—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. Minister?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: Let me tell you about this process that they claim was so secret. We were talking about 700 students consulted; 70 organizations over two years; 2,400 people gave advice on drafts via the website and through letters. This was the point. We have experts: parents, teachers, principals and community leaders. It’s important to note that we took their advice.

Our Ministry of Education is known as the best in the world. We have the best experts. We have the best institute to train teachers. We have the most visitors from around the world coming to that ministry in our government—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Well, it’s really interesting: If these consultations were so broad, then why are people so outraged now?

While the Liberals posted these changes to the curriculum in January, you were deliberately quiet in posting them before the rest of the curriculum changes for the fall were ready to be released. Why didn’t you announce these significant changes to parents?

The minister did make announcements about eating standards in schools, welcoming students from Haiti, new

school safety rules, graduation rates and hands-on technology training. If you stand behind your decision to teach sex education to grade 1 kids, then why didn't you announce it?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I think we do understand what the Conservatives mean to do, and I think they are back to the politics of division. What we are doing with this government is working with the experts, engaging the right groups, including parents and experts in education, to develop a curriculum that represents Ontario today. There isn't a parent out there who doesn't want their child educated with the latest and most up-to-date and appropriate, including age-appropriate, education. If parents go to our website, they will see exactly the kind of dialogue that teachers would have with those students at the right age, with the right terminology—nothing that this crowd could be afraid of. All I can say is that in the 12 years since the last update, our world has changed. It's our responsibility to make—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: It's quite clear that the McGuinty government failed to consult with probably the most important group of experts: parents. Where was the parent consultation? Premier McGuinty gave more prominence to the completion of an administrative review of—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Withdraw the comment, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I withdraw.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It's time to throw somebody out.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I appreciate the offer from the member from Trinity-Spadina. Do you want to be the first?

I'd just remind the honourable members that it is important that we all have the opportunity to hear a question and hear an answer. Please continue.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: The McGuinty government chose to release the changes separately from the rest of the curriculum revisions, and one has to wonder why. Why did you bury the changes from parents? They have a right to know: Was your motive for making no announcement and burying the decision to teach sex education to six-year-olds because you didn't want anyone, including your own caucus, to know about it?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: First of all, we need to correct the record. What is absolutely critical is that parents have been consulted during a two-year process—70 organizations. We have prided ourselves on including parents in every step of the massive changes we've made for the better in education.

Let's go back to our grade 1 students. Does this party honestly think it's inappropriate for young children to learn about what their body parts are, that they are in fact private, to know what we're supposed to be showing and not showing, when you're in grade 1? Are you honestly opposed to the language as is written for the grade 1 curriculum to know the right names of your body parts?

Tell me that you are not in the Dark Ages about what a grade 1 student is coming home with through the Internet or through the schoolyard. We want those children taught properly.

ENERGY CONSERVATION

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Acting Premier. Ontarians care about the environment. They know that we all have to act today to deal with climate change, air pollution, depletion of resources. Three quarters of Ontarians say they're trying to be more environmentally responsible than a year ago. But making the green choice to retrofit their homes should be affordable. Why won't this government make it possible for all Ontarians to be green?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: To the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm not sure where the member is going with this question, but surely we've done more when it comes to providing all ratepayers with opportunities to conserve. Our home energy savings program has helped 160,000 families provide retrofits to their homes to help make their homes more efficient. Over 348,000 energy audits have been done to help those very families make important decisions on their homes, to save on their energy costs and contribute to building an energy culture in this province. We've done more than any government has for conservation.

I will agree with the member on one thing, and that's that we intend to do more, and we will do more.

1050

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Well, three quarters of Ontarians don't think governments are doing enough to address the environment.

It's telling that your government announced its home retrofit program in a million-dollar Rosedale home. People have to have a lot of money to put out the kind of cash that's needed to actually do the retrofits that are required. It's no wonder, then, that only one in 25 homeowners have taken advantage of the home retrofit program. That means that a very small percentage of Ontarians have been able to actually take advantage of that cash. They need a different approach.

Won't your government, today, on Earth Day, announce that it will make home retrofits financially accessible to the vast majority of Ontarians?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm almost thinking that the member opposite, and this surprises me, is suggesting that our home energy programs and our home energy retrofit program are not things that are benefiting homeowners across this province. It appears that he has taken the position that the Conservative federal government has taken to back away from these programs. We are not going to back away from those programs.

Some 160,000 families across this province have benefited from our home retrofit program, 348,000 families have had home audits, and thousands of individuals

have had opportunities to find employment in what is a budding new sector in this province. This program has been successful, along with a number of the other programs that we're engaged in.

We remain fully committed to conservation; we are today, and we will be in the future.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: If Stephen Harper is the base of comparison, then we're putting a pretty low standard here.

There are a lot of ways to make retrofits accessible to most Ontarians. Manitoba provides low-interest loans for home retrofits that people can pay back through their home utility bills. BC has a green landlords program that will retrofit all apartment units in 20 years. There are affordable options that work for modest-income households.

Why won't you take the steps necessary to ensure that all Ontarians can afford to go green?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Once again, this program has been one of the more successful programs that we have, but let me just talk about some of the other programs that are out there that are making a difference.

We have our Power Pledge program. We have smart meters that we're bringing in, and I know the member would support that. We have the Great Refrigerator Roundup. We have the Peaksaver program. We have the aboriginal retrofit program, hot and cool savings, Every Kilowatt Counts, banning inefficient light bulbs. The list goes on and on. We are doing more in the conservation area than any government before us.

When it comes to assisting low- and middle-income people, in the recent budget the Minister of Finance announced a \$455-million tax credit. That will be going into the pockets of low- and middle-income Ontarians as they try to adjust to increasing energy rates.

We care about those individuals. We're going to work with them and everybody else in this province to ensure—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Ontarians understand that investing in transit and the environment is not just the right thing to do to protect our planet, but it creates jobs, reduces health care costs and improves our quality of life. Every dollar invested in public transit returns up to \$9 in jobs, economic activity and reduced pollution and health care costs.

Can the Minister of Transportation say what the impact of slashing \$4 billion from Transit City and \$170 million from the bus replacement program in this year's budget will be on future health care costs, lost jobs and lost economic activity?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It's extremely important that we understand that this is not about cutting funding for transit; this is about stretching the money that we have committed over a longer period of time. The debate that's going on right now, fuelled by the third party here in the city of Toronto, is absolutely beside the point.

What we have said is that we are committed to building the Transit City projects, the Metrolinx projects, in Toronto. We are committed to light rail transit. We are committed to making sure that there's an integrated regional network of transit in the GTHA. That's our commitment, and we are going to continue to work on the projects even though the member opposite is part of a party that wants to create the notion that we are not continuing. That's just not the case.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: The whole question is: when? Three hundred frustrated people packed city hall yesterday. They shared personal stories about the way these transit cuts are affecting them now and into the future, and criticized the McGuinty government's short-sighted and backward plan to slash the funding and to delay it for many years. Why is the province telling people who live far from subways, who take overcrowded buses, who sit in gridlock, to wait longer to get home to their families? Why the delay?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: What we're telling those people is that we understand that they need public transit in Toronto and in the GTHA. What we are telling those people is that we're going to continue with these projects, that we're going to continue building and that we have had to stretch the projects out over a slightly longer period of time.

One of the proponents of transit in the city of Toronto, Adam Giambrone, has said, "If you've got a cash flow problem, we're happy to talk. We're happy to stretch out some of these projects. This isn't just a hard line in the sand. This is about being reasonable." You can see that Adam Giambrone and, I hope, the mayor are starting to understand that a plan is coming. We are developing a plan with Metrolinx. We need them to work with us because we understand exactly that those jobs and those methods of transportation for people who live in the city are absolutely critical. That's why we're going to continue.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Michael Prue: Back to the minister: If Toronto is going to be a world-class city, and it wants to be, it needs to have a world-class transit system. This morning the mayor will be signing a pledge to build Transit City by 2020. I am going down to sign that, as are other New Democrat MPPs. Will the Minister of Transportation sign it as well?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Here's what I think is happening: I think the member opposite and the mayor understand that we are absolutely committed to bringing forward a plan. I think they understand that we understand how important this is and that we are going to be

continuing with the projects. The kind of debate that's going on here is about when and how we are going to do it, so that they can claim when we bring the plan forward that they pushed us to do it. The reality is that we're on track. We're developing a plan with Metrolinx. We're going to be continuing with these projects, and there's money going into projects in the city of Toronto right now—today. We're going to continue, and I am very pleased that Adam Giambrone and the mayor seem to be understanding that they need to work with us so we can get that plan going.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. If members want to have cross-chamber conversations, please take them outside or to your respective offices.

New question.

PUBLIC SECTOR ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Minister of Government Services. Our leader, Tim Hudak, proposed a plan and legislation to bring greater transparency and accountability to all parts of government. We're calling for freedom of information to be extended to all public bodies, and for all hospitality expenses, contracts over \$10,000 and position reclassifications to be posted. There are over 600 public bodies, but the Premier is only making 22 of them be reviewed by the Integrity Commissioner's office. I ask the minister: Do you see any reason why the expenses of all other public bodies should be treated differently than these 22 agencies?

1100

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Our government has moved very aggressively to create more responsible organization within our agencies, boards and commissions. We have changed the legislation to a very large extent so that all these organizations become more accountable.

I have not seen the proposals that the Conservative Party is putting forward. I will be more than pleased to look at them.

Let me say that I think we have proposed several initiatives before, and their party actually voted against each and every one of them. For example, we opened up the publicly funded universities—they were brought under the freedom-of-information act. Their party voted against that—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: We didn't hear much there. One agency that gets a special free pass on their expenses being reviewed is Dalton McGuinty's local health integration networks. The Integrity Commissioner's office, as well as the LHIN headquarters, confirmed that no one is reviewing the expenses of LHIN boards, staff or consultants. Yet, strangely, Premier McGuinty said the Integrity Commissioner reviews LHIN expenses, which is why he was not listening to our call for a public review or adopting our accountability measures.

The Premier and Minister Takhar have not explained why Dalton McGuinty said the Integrity Commissioner's office reviews LHIN expenses when they don't. What makes you think you can get away with this?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Actually, I really don't understand where their party stands on these issues. When we brought the legislation forward to post these expenses online, their party opposed it.

Also, let me just quote from—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Please continue.

Hon. Harinder Takhar: Let me just quote, in Hansard from September 16, the member from Durham. When we proposed this posting of expenses, this is what he said: "We know that there could be as many as 80,000 employees filing expenses. It could amount to a million or more expense documents to be audited. The Integrity Commissioner's office has eight employees today under their charge." So he was basically saying that we shouldn't be doing it because of the expenses. Now you are advocating that we should be doing it because of them.

My view is that we need to have accountability, but we also need to make sure that there is a balance between accountability—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

TAXATION

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Deputy Premier. We have with us today a number of First Nations members from the Rama First Nation and their tribal council. They're here again for one simple reason: The crown, in 1764, said that First Nations would be exempt from paying certain taxes. Your government has negotiated with the federal government an HST that's going to be implemented on July 1. My question to you is simply this: Why did you not ensure to exempt them in the first place when you negotiated this HST with the federal government?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: To the Minister of Revenue.

Hon. John Wilkinson: I welcome the question from the member. I do want to welcome the many people from First Nations who are visiting us today at Queen's Park. In particular, Grand Chief Patrick Madahbee is here. We welcome you and we're delighted that you're here, both inside and outside of the Legislature.

I say to the member that it is important to remember that for some 30 years now, all the parties in this House have had the privilege of having government, and we have always provided, since I think about 1980, a point-of-sale exemption in regard to the provincial sales tax.

On July 1, there will be no provincial sales tax. There will be just one harmonized sales tax in Ontario, administered by the federal government. We have reached an agreement with them that under the administrative rules of the federal government—and what they do right across the country—when a First Nations person is on-reserve, there is no sales tax. When they're off-reserve—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The buck stops with you, Minister. It is your HST; it's not the federal government's HST. It is you who has implemented this policy, and it was up to you, as a government, to ensure that the point-of-sale exemption was in place when you negotiated it.

So I ask you again: Why don't you take your responsibility and ensure that, by July 1, there will be a point-of-sale exemption? It's Dalton McGuinty's HST.

Hon. John Wilkinson: Despite the bluster, let's get to the facts. On July 1, there is no provincial sales tax; there is but one harmonized sales tax, administered solely by the federal government.

We have said to the federal government that we believe that the administrative practice in the province of Ontario that sees the point-of-sale exemption should be maintained in the province.

First Nations are rightly frustrated, as is our government, as should all members be frustrated by the fact that the federal government refuses to sit down at the table where we have been working with First Nations. The administrator of the tax has to agree, and to date they have not. That is why we are calling and we should all call on the federal government to—

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: When the Speaker is standing, you're supposed to sit down.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): And when the Speaker is standing, you're not supposed to be talking.

New question.

PESTICIDES

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: My question is for the Minister of the Environment. As you know, today is Earth Day, and it marks the one-year anniversary of Ontario's ban on the use and sale of cosmetic pesticides. The ban protects Ontarians from unnecessary use of cosmetic pesticides on our lawns and gardens and is one of the toughest in the world. We're seeing other jurisdictions such as New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and BC following our lead.

With the warm weather approaching and people starting to get outside tending their gardens, many had traditionally used products such as weed and feed on their lawns. Now, with the pesticide ban in place for a year, people are looking for the best ways to adjust their practices to maintain beautiful lawns.

Minister, how can people find out more information about what products they can and can't use and how to maintain a healthy, pesticide-free lawn?

Hon. John Gerretsen: Let me first of all congratulate the member on her great advocacy on this action and a number of other actions that this government has taken. Let me also say that the people of Ontario are proud of the toughest ban on the use of cosmetic pesticides in all of North America. I know that the official opposition

belittles that effort, but the people of Ontario are totally behind us in this regard.

Yes, we have banned about 250 pesticide products from sale. That includes about 80 pesticide ingredients that are banned for cosmetic use. Of course, the real reason why we're doing this is to make sure that we are protecting the health and welfare of all Ontarians, particularly the younger children who may have been affected by previous pesticide use.

You can have a healthy and beautiful lawn and garden without the unnecessary risks posed to our health—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: Ontarians want information on environmentally friendly products. They want it for their lawns and they're looking for green alternatives. Thank you for that information. They're also looking for new eco-friendly products like low-risk and biopesticide alternatives so that they can do their part for the environment.

Through actions such as the pesticide ban, we not only protect our environment and the health of our families, but we also spur economic growth, research, innovation and new environmental solutions.

Minister, what is being done to help ensure that there are new environmentally friendly lawn-care options available and that the research and development is being done right here at home in Ontario?

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: First of all, I encourage everyone to go to ontario.ca/pesticides if they're looking for information and tips on how to green their lawns without the use of pesticides. And yes, we have seen Ontario businesses take the ball and run with it. Manufacturers are investing in innovation and developing pesticide-free technologies and products. Many retailers around this province are stocking eco-friendly lawn and garden solutions.

Through our cosmetic-use pesticides research and innovation program, nine projects across this province have received a total of \$432,000 to promote the development of greener alternatives to pest control. It's happening in the lawn care industry, in landscaping, park maintenance and the turf management sector. There is a different way in which we can do it without the use of pesticides on our lawns, and these companies are showing us how to do it.

TAXATION

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: My question is to the Minister of Revenue. Minister, you know there are hundreds of Ontario First Nation members here today, many here in the audience. I know that a chief from one of my ridings, Chief Sharon Stinson Henry from the Chippewas of Rama, is in the members' gallery.

1110

Minister, there are just 70 days left before your greedy harmonized sales tax grab starts being collected across Ontario. Your Liberals shut down public hearings, and in

the one day of hearings held on your second sales tax increase, you did nothing to stand up for First Nations chiefs, who were given 10 minutes to explain what this \$3-billion tax grab will mean for their communities and your so-called new relationship.

Like all Ontario families, they'll be hit hard by your 8% increase on home heating and gas, particularly those living in northern Ontario. What made you think you would get away with not consulting First Nations about your greedy HST tax grab and how it affects them?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to thank the member for the question. Again, I want to reiterate that we welcome our First Nations to the Legislature today.

In the province of Ontario, when it comes to the GST and the PST, there is no sales tax on-reserve. When a First Nation member is off-reserve, there are two different treatments. When it comes to the federal GST, if an item is to be delivered back to the reserve, then there is a point-of-sale exemption; there is no tax.

In the province of Ontario, for some 30 years when you were in government, when the other party was in government and when we've been in government, we've had a point-of-sale exemption. We believe that is the fair and proper way to administer the point-of-sale exemption, which, I might add, is not available in any other province.

We have said to the federal government, "We believe that you should adopt the administrative practice we have in the province of Ontario." On July 1, they are the sole administrator. We are as frustrated as First Nations—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Minister, you made the deal. You didn't consult. The McGuinty Liberals did not consult with First Nation chiefs any more than they consulted with other Ontarians. When the PC critic asked for the courtesy of more time for them to be heard, your committee members voted unanimously to step on their rights. You shut down public debate on your greedy \$3-billion tax grab. You defeated 500,000 amendments to the HST bill without even looking at them, and there are just 70 days left—70 days left—to do the right thing for Ontario families, including Ontario's First Nation families, whom you have completely shut out of this.

Will you scrap your plans now to make First Nations and all Ontarians pay this greedy \$3-billion tax grab?

Hon. John Wilkinson: There we have it. There is a party that believes that we should have two sales taxes in the province of Ontario. We believe there should be one. That's what happens in modern economies. By doing this, that will result in some \$47 billion worth of more investment in this province and some 591,000 more jobs. That's why we're doing this. But we need to make sure that taxes are applied fairly and equitably.

We believe that the point-of-sale exemption on the provincial portion of the HST, administered by the federal government, should be maintained. But to make that happen, there is one party that will not come to the table: the federal government. We have asked them, the First

Nations have asked them, and I believe all the parties in this House should ask the federal government to be part of that. You cannot have an exemption—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Deputy Premier. Last week, we had the opportunity to meet with the Premier along with Xstrata here at Queen's Park. Xstrata was pretty clear: They said that not only are they shutting down the refinery and smelter in Timmins, but there will not be other refinery smelters being built in the province of Ontario, including the project up at the Ring of Fire.

My question to you is simply this: Why would Ontario allow itself to be put in the position of not adding value to those natural resources that we are so lucky to have and be blessed with in this province and instead allow those particular metals to be processed outside of Ontario?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I think it's important to note that even when this member today asking the question was part of the government of the day, even at that time, the reality for us in Ontario—although acknowledging a very difficult circumstance with Xstrata in Timmins and a very difficult decision for us to have to watch, because while they're not shutting down their whole operation, we want to see all of Xstrata's operations continue to flourish, and it doesn't look like that's happening. But even at that time, and for many years now, Ontario has actually been a net benefit to doing that kind of processing here in Ontario and bringing resources into Ontario. We actually do that more than resources are being sent elsewhere. I'm happy to provide that information to the member opposite.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: You're the Minister of Economic Development and Trade, and you don't understand the basics of the minerals industry? The issue is simply this: Ontario has an abundance of natural resources in the ground and in the forest. If we don't have an ability to add value to those products, the economy of Ontario will suffer.

Xstrata was clear. There will not be any more refining, there will not be any more smelting done, as far as new projects coming into the province of Ontario. We will become the extractors of the ore, we will transform it into concentrated pellets, and we will ship it out of this province to be added when it comes to value.

So my question to you is, what are you going to do to ensure that Ontario is able to benefit from those natural resources by having value added to them here in Ontario?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I'm sorry, but I do have to set the record straight. The reality is that here in Ontario—and for many years—we bring more minerals into Ontario from elsewhere for processing. Nickel alone: We have 85% of that mineral processed here in Ontario.

As I said, I'm happy to share this information with this member—and perhaps it has changed over the years since he was a member of the government several years ago. But that is our reality. We are home to processing, here in Ontario.

I recognize the difficulty with the Xstrata situation. That is why our government has responded in working with local leadership and providing funding to that local leadership to look for other opportunities that could come that way in that very mine and in that very foundry. That is the kind of work we're prepared to do. I appreciate the difficulty, because we don't want to see job loss anywhere. So the—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Jeff Leal: My question is for the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure.

Yesterday, I was disturbed to hear the Leader of the Opposition's comments about coal-fired generation—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Hamilton East and the Minister of Economic Development: Have the discussion outside. I don't need the two of you interrupting everyone else.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I could make lunch reservations for them.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): You're not helpful either, member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. Perhaps the three of you—and that may be the best thing I can do: send the three of you out for lunch together.

Member from Peterborough.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Yesterday, I was disturbed to hear the Leader of the Opposition's comments about coal-fired generation in this province.

As the minister knows, between 1995 and 2003, during the PCs' time in government, coal-fired generation went up by some 127%, while at the same time, carbon dioxide emissions increased by 124%.

Yesterday, the current leader expressed his party's belief that our government should have spent taxpayers' dollars to install scrubbers at coal plants, a band-aid solution to fix the dirty problem they created. That would have cost \$1.6 billion, according to 2007 estimates.

Currently, the government is on track to eliminate coal plants by 2014, with four plants slated to close this year, four years ahead of time. In 2009, the use of coal-fired generation was at its lowest rate in 45 years, down 70%.

Could the minister please assure the House that he does not intend to install scrubbers at coal-fired plants instead of closing them outright?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Absolutely. I share with the member his disappointment that the Leader of the Opposition continues—he is consistent with their former love affair with coal. He continues that, but it continues to be a misguided position. It continues to be a—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would just remind the honourable minister that it would be important to talk about government policy and not opposition policy.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I agree, Mr. Speaker. We do have to contrast, but I'll try to keep that in mind.

The McGuinty government is reducing emissions and improving the health of Ontarians by eliminating coal. While their party continues to want to cuddle up to coal—and I think that's an interesting contradiction—every year, pollution due to coal generation accounts for the premature deaths of hundreds of Ontarians.

We remain determined that by 2014, this province will be completely out—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Leal: I'd like to thank the minister for his response.

Minister, a decade ago, Ontario's energy system was not in good shape. It was an unreliable system with constant shortages, and demand was exceeding supply. The energy sector was hesitant to invest in Ontario. Our infrastructure and the transmission distribution lines that bring power to our homes and businesses had capacity issues and were not keeping up with demand, let alone being able to handle more supply. Quite simply, the government of the day was not making the investments that were needed to ensure a sustainable and reliable electricity system.

Minister, Ontarians know that electricity prices are going up. They also want to know from you that we're making improvements to our system so that the investment they're making in tax dollars delivers good, reliable power.

1120

Hon. Brad Duguid: A lot has changed in the last six or seven years. We've gone from an energy sector that was, frankly, in a state of crisis to an energy sector that's now in a state of stability. We're planning reliable, sustainable energy, with a mixture of emission-free power and conservation programs. That's helping our families across this province use less energy. At the same time, we've brought 8,000 megawatts of new supply online over the last six years, and we plan to bring forward up to 10,000 megawatts online by 2011. That's a huge increase.

That brings stability to a sector that, seven years ago, was in absolute chaos and crisis. It's something that has required some tough decisions on our part today, but it's ensuring that, as we move forward today and into the future, we will have a solid energy supply in this province that's clean, green, and helping us create a green economy—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

WASTE DIVERSION

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: My question is to the Minister of the Environment. As you know, Minister,

today is Earth Day. In the 2003 election campaign, your party promised a 60% diversion rate from landfills by 2007. Your own report last year, *From Waste to Worth*, indicates that only 22% of all waste is being diverted. This includes a 39% contribution from the municipalities, but only 12% from industrial and commercial that is being diverted from landfills. That's your area of responsibility. Why have you failed so miserably in keeping garbage out of our landfills?

Hon. John Gerretsen: First of all, I would like to thank the member for asking a question about the environment. I think that's question number three in two years from the Conservative Party on the environment.

We have brought in some very strong new recycling programs. Look at the municipal hazardous waste program—toxic material that used to end up at our landfill sites—which has been very, very successful. We just recently brought in a tire recycling program to take the 13 million or so tires that are produced and used in the province of Ontario out of landfill sites. We have just brought in the electronics recycling program, where basically all electronic equipment now, from televisions to computers—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The members from Renfrew and Haldimand-Norfolk.

Minister?

Hon. John Gerretsen: All of these programs, including the electronics recycling program, are done in order to take this stuff out of the landfill sites.

We've done a lot of work over the last four to five years, and we intend to do a lot more. We can always do more work in order to make the environment for the people of Ontario the best that it possibly can be.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: The problem is that the diversion rate today is worse than it was 10 years ago. You have done nothing to fulfill your promise in the 2003 election.

As a result of your dismal record, the people of West Ottawa, Stittsville and Kanata are forced again to fight for their community because of a proposal to double the size of the Carp landfill, this despite the fact that this site is now in the midst of residential neighbourhoods. This landfill site is intended for ICI waste—your responsibility, the province's responsibility—and the diversion rate now of 12% is less than it was 10 or 12 years ago. What are you going to do to divert ICI waste from landfills and make this huge expansion unnecessary?

Hon. John Gerretsen: First of all, we look forward to that party supporting our new Waste Diversion Act, which will be introduced in this House within the next four to five weeks. We want to make sure that we keep as much out of our landfill sites as possible. We want to work towards a zero-waste society, and we need the help of everybody in this province—in the IC&I sector as well as in the residential sector—to work with us on that. So we look forward to their support when we introduce this

new bill to make producers—the people who actually make the various products, the people who actually package the various products—responsible for their after-life use. We look forward to their participation in that.

We can do a lot better. We've done a lot, and the only way we're going to do it better is by taking stuff out of landfill sites through a new waste diversion—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Minister of Consumer Services. Yesterday, I asked a question of the Minister of Consumer Services. The question was about an issue which falls squarely within the mandate of her Ministry of Consumer Services. The minister fobbed off the question to the Minister of Economic Development. I'll ask the Minister of Consumer Services, the only cabinet voice for Hamilton, again: What is the minister going to do to protect consumers from Labatt's attempts to establish a monopoly and kill good brewery jobs in Hamilton?

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: I'm glad to stand in this House and talk as the member from Hamilton Mountain, as the Minister of Consumer Services. For some reason, this member doesn't really know what consumer services is about. It's about protecting consumers when they buy a house, when they buy a new car, when they go on vacation; to help them with public safety issues. But you know, it gives me an opportunity to share with this member something that is very important, I think, for this whole House to know: I speak for Hamilton. You put Hamilton down. It's time for you to lift up and start talking about Hamilton. It's a great city, Mr. Miller. Come on, speak for Hamilton.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'm very hopeful that within the next week there will be a full attendance here, because I'm very much looking forward to delivering a statement reiterating some past comments and putting forth some new comments. I've said this before within this House, and I direct this to every member in this chamber: It is one thing for you to be critical of a government policy or maybe critical of a position, but let's not bring it to a personal level. I think it's incumbent on all of us that, yes, we all have constituencies that we represent and we need to make sure that we are voices, and you are voices, for your constituency, but let's not bring it to the level of personal attacks on one another.

Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: I guess I'm guilty of sticking up for the workers of Hamilton; I'm sorry.

In attempting to control the beer industry in Hamilton, Labatt's offered the city \$2 million, money that would have been paid to get out of the lease before its May 2012 end date. Labatt's tried to tie that money to block any other brewery from using that site. Will the minister from Hamilton stand up for the community, under the

auspices of her ministry, to protect consumers from Labatt's blatant attacks to stifle any brewery competition and kill those skilled workers' chances to maintain their good jobs in Hamilton?

Once again, I apologize for sticking up for the people of Hamilton.

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: You don't do that ever. Unbelievable—you never do that.

But it gives me an opportunity to talk about the Ministry of Consumer Services. I want to talk about the Ministry of Consumer Services and just some of the things that this ministry does. This is what we do: Last year, we gave advice and assistance to over 55,000 inquiries and complaints; over 528,000 mediated refunds and cancelled or rescinded contracts for consumers; goods delivered, services started and other remedies in hundreds of cases. In fact, at the same time last year, the ministry compliance and enforcement plan: 597 compliance inspections in field visits; 1,304 charges laid. It's about protecting the consumer when they spend their good, hard-working money on house—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

1130

MUNICIPAL FUNDING

Mr. Mario Sergio: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Minister, the McGuinty government recently released the 2010 Ontario budget and the Open Ontario plan, a five-year plan which will see Ontario open to new jobs and growth. I understand that we have received support for both of these initiatives.

AMO President Peter Hume, in supporting the budget on behalf of Ontario municipalities, said, "The budget's overall emphasis on job creation and economic development will also have spin-off benefits for municipal governments," and, "The government's plan for fighting its deficit by and large maintains municipal government and our cost-sharing arrangements with the province."

I'm hoping that the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing could elaborate on some of the cost-sharing arrangements—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. James J. Bradley: This government recognizes how important it is to work closely with our municipalities. That's why, in partnership with Ontario's municipalities, our government created the Provincial-Municipal Fiscal and Service Delivery Review, resulting in a landmark agreement between our government and Ontario's 444 municipalities. The review brought together Ontario, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario and the city of Toronto to look at new ways to fund and deliver services. By 2018, we will have increased: ongoing annual support to municipalities to more than \$3.8 billion, an increase of over 250% since 2003; uploading of Ontario Works benefits, saving \$425 million; uploading court security

costs, saving municipalities \$125 million. By having a 10-year plan—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Mario Sergio: The province must continue to provide programs such as the Provincial-Municipal Fiscal and Service Delivery Review to create a better Ontario. I will be certain to take this information back to my constituents to assure them that this government is continuing to work alongside Ontario municipalities.

In these tough times, hard decisions have to be made. I have heard specifically from the constituents in my riding of York West who are worried that the municipal programs already funded by the government may be affected. I note that the province has worked with the city of Toronto on a number of initiatives across the government, and I'm hoping today that the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing can help Ontarians understand exactly what has been done for our fine city of Toronto. Please, Minister, provide us with some information.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: While the economic situation and the provincial deficit may bring us some challenges, I want to assure the member for York West that our commitment to investing in much-needed affordable housing remains unchanged.

In 2009, through the social housing renovation and retrofit program, Toronto was approved for more than \$200 million for retrofits and repairs. Under the affordable housing program extension, the city of Toronto has been allocated more than \$140 million to build 1,000 supportive housing units and provide 122 home ownership loans. We've also prevented 4,500 evictions by providing Toronto with \$7.8 million for a rent bank.

By the time the uploading is fully implemented, Toronto will be saving an estimated \$400 million annually. And \$3.5 billion, I should point out, is what we—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

POWER PLANT

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: My question is to the minister of economic—Minister of Energy and Infrastructure. Over a month ago, I asked you if you would listen to the health and safety concerns of Oakville residents and order an individual environmental assessment at the proposed Oakville power plant. You pushed aside my question and you ignored those concerns. Let's see if you're ready to answer. Minister, yes or no, will there be an individual environmental assessment on the Oakville power plant?

Hon. Brad Duguid: To be honest, energy and infrastructure is enough. I don't need economic development in my portfolio too, but thank you for suggesting that.

As we always are as a government, we're listening to all stakeholders and all parties when these matters are going through. No energy infrastructure is easy when it comes to siting. It's challenging, it takes time and the proponents often have to work with the local communities. We want to be very respectful of that.

In terms of direct environmental issues, if that's what the member is looking for in terms of a response, I'd be happy to refer the supplementary to the Minister of the Environment.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I'll take that as a no.

Last month, you gave the member from Oakville a pat on the back instead of answering my question about the Oakville power plant, but his Bill 8 has a loophole that makes it a publicity stunt. That loophole exempts any gas-powered plant that has obtained the required approvals, permits and other instruments before the bill receives royal assent. The developer of Oakville's gas-powered plant anticipates that these required documents will be obtained by the summer or fall of 2010—that's this summer or fall.

Minister, will Bill 8 pass before the end of this session in support of Oakville residents, or is it merely a gimmick that will have no effect on the Oakville power plant?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'd better refer this to the Minister of the Environment.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Yes, we understand, of course, that the Ontario Power Authority has selected a proponent, but let's make it absolutely clear that that proponent needs to meet and complete all the environmental approval requirements under the Environmental Assessment Act and under the Environmental Protection Act.

Ministry of the Environment officials will ensure that the proponent's plan can meet or exceed provincial standards and be operated in an environmentally responsible way. So they need approvals. We're looking at it right now, and in due course, a decision will be made.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Deputy Premier. Massey Centre in my riding provides support for teen mothers and their babies. It operates a daycare. Today, the daycare is closed and its parents in crisis. The workers are on strike, facing financial hardship. The centre is struggling after years of underfunding.

The Minister of Children and Youth Services has been responsive and open to the centre's administration. For that, she has had their respect. But the minister is not in a position to put money on the table to settle this dispute.

Will you give this ministry the funds it needs so that this centre can put people back to work and put the daycare back in operation? Will you take that action?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: To the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I appreciate the member opposite's compliment on my openness to working with this organization.

As I have had the chance to tell him in conversations that we have had about this important issue, we have received a proposal from the Massey Centre. Unfortunately, given the nature of the proposal and the fact that this is in the realm of contract and labour negotiations at

this time, we are unable, and I am unable, to interfere in this important process. I know the member opposite believes, as I do, in the collective bargaining process. It needs to be free from interference. We cannot engage in the dialogue at this time.

But my offer remains open: Separate and apart from contractual negotiations, I look forward to meeting with this organization and talking about the important work that they do in their community.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate the concern of the minister, but I go back to the Deputy Premier. We have parents and children facing a very difficult time. We have workers who are on the street without an income. We have a situation where underfunding over the years has put people in an impossible position. That needs to be corrected.

We're not asking for people to interfere with collective bargaining; we're asking for help to resolve this situation. Will the Deputy Premier take the action to help the parents and the children at this centre?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: With respect to the process, there is help from the Ministry of Labour. A conciliator is available to assist at all times with these talks.

With respect to assistance for the parents, our regional office has informed me that the Massey Centre Early Learning Centre, which provides child care to families, intends to continue to provide care to families served by this child care centre. The prenatal residential program will be closed for the duration of the strike, but the Massey Centre has arranged alternate accommodation for the prenatal unit residents from other young parent resource centres and other community resource centres.

I encourage both sides to work to resolve the dispute. Once the labour dispute is resolved, I look forward to hearing from the Massey Centre about their programs and working with them to continue to deliver these critically important programs in our city.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The time for question period has ended.

DEFERRED VOTES

CREATING THE FOUNDATION FOR JOBS AND GROWTH ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 POSANT LES FONDATIONS DE L'EMPLOI ET DE LA CROISSANCE

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of Bill 16, An Act to implement 2010 Budget measures and to enact or amend various Acts / Projet de loi 16, Loi mettant en oeuvre certaines mesures énoncées dans le Budget de 2010 et édictant ou modifiant diverses lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1139 to 1144.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): All those in favour will rise one at a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Aggelonitis, Sophia
Albanese, Laura
Arthurs, Wayne
Balkissoon, Bas
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Best, Margaret
Bradley, James J.
Brotan, Laurel C.
Caplan, David
Carroll, Aileen
Chan, Michael
Colle, Mike
Delaney, Bob
Duguid, Brad
Duncan, Dwight
Fonseca, Peter

Gerretsen, John
Hoy, Pat
Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Johnson, Rick
Kular, Kuldip
Kwinter, Monte
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Leal, Jeff
Levac, Dave
Milloy, John
Moridi, Reza
Murray, Glen R.
Oraziotti, David
Pendergast, Leeanna
Phillips, Gerry

Pupatello, Sandra
Ramsay, David
Rinaldi, Lou
Ruprecht, Tony
Sandals, Liz
Sergio, Mario
Smith, Monique
Sorbara, Greg
Sousa, Charles
Takhar, Harinder S.
Van Bommel, Maria
Wilkinson, John
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): All those opposed?

Nays

Amott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Barrett, Toby
Bisson, Gilles
Chudleigh, Ted
Dunlop, Garfield
Elliott, Christine

Hardeman, Ernie
Jones, Sylvia
Klees, Frank
Kormos, Peter
Marchese, Rosario
Miller, Norm
Miller, Paul

Munro, Julia
Prue, Michael
Savoline, Joyce
Sterling, Norman W.
Tabuns, Peter
Wilson, Jim
Yakabuski, John

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 46; the nays are 21.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to the order of the House dated April 21, 2010, the bill is ordered referred to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

There being no further deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1148 to 1300.

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I have a message from the Honourable David C. Onley, the Lieutenant Governor, signed by his own hand.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The Lieutenant Governor transmits estimates of certain sums required for the services of the province for the year ending March 31, 2011, and recommends them to the Legislative Assembly. Dated April 22, 2010.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Margaret R. Best: Today, I'm very pleased to rise in this Legislature, as this is Ontario Coaches Week, and I would like to introduce the following people who are in the audience with us today: Paul Connelly from

Uxbridge, who is a high school coach; Sheilagh Croxon from Etobicoke, who is the chair of the Coaches Association of Ontario; Ann Doggett from Toronto, who has been a field hockey coach in the high-performance program since 1998; Tracy Angus from Burlington, who has been a judo coach for over 23 years; Michael Broughton of Toronto, who is a wheelchair basketball coach for Ontario's provincial team; and Susan Kitchen of Toronto, who is the executive director of the Coaches Association of Ontario. Welcome to the Ontario Legislature.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'm pleased to introduce for a second time today—and it is equally a pleasure—the co-hosts of Good Day GTA on my favourite radio station, Classical 96.3 FM, Mike Duncan and Jean Stilwell, in the east members' gallery; and also to welcome a constituent of mine, Susan Kitchen, whom the minister just previously introduced, of Estoril Road in Meadowvale in Mississauga—Streetsville.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

VICTIMS OF CRIME

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: This year marks the fifth annual National Victims of Crime Awareness Week in Canada. Across our nation, we remember that every victim matters. We keep in mind the impact that crime can have on victims, on families and on friends. We acknowledge those who have been victims of crime and those whom we have lost as a result of crime. We highlight that a crime may occur in a moment, but that for victims of crime, the impact can have a lasting effect.

We recognize the work of those people in our province whose commitment helps support victims of crime. But during this week, it is also important that we raise awareness of where we can do better and ensure that our justice system and our society treat victims of crime with the utmost dignity and respect.

The Ontario PC caucus has a long history of supporting victims of crime. In 1995, we introduced and passed the Victims' Bill of Rights, which begins: "The people of Ontario believe that victims of crime, who have suffered harm and whose rights and securities have been violated by crime, should be treated with compassion and fairness." These are words the PC caucus, and our leader, Tim Hudak, will always stand by.

The PC caucus maintains the belief that the best support we can provide is to reduce crime, but where there are victims of crime, we'll continue to demand that their rights and dignities be respected.

PHARMACISTS

Mr. Peter Kormos: Down where I come from in Welland riding—Port Colborne, Wainfleet, Welland, Thorold, St. Catharines—people know their pharmacists and people have respect for their pharmacists. I'm talking

about neighbourhood pharmacists, community pharmacists. I'm talking about women and men who, in some cases, have served two, three and four generations of folks.

That's why I've got in my office now almost 500 signed messages from constituents—more are coming, and they'll keep on coming—telling me, and asking me to tell the McGuinty Liberals, that people in Ontario depend upon the convenient, accessible advice and services they get from their local pharmacy, that people in Ontario, just like they do down where I come from, want to ensure that their pharmacists are there when they need them. They want to know that they can talk to their pharmacist after work or when they can't get to their doctor's office or when their doctor's office is closed. That's why they're telling me to tell Mr. McGuinty to stop his attack on small-town pharmacists.

Do you want to take on drug prices? Then muster up the courage, which I suspect is hard to find, to take on the big multinational drug companies. Don't beat up on the pharmacists.

If you think I'm the only voice saying that, you're sadly mistaken. Folks like Gilda Gatti from Thorold are saying that. Folks like Mrs. R. Quirion from Welland are saying that. People like Marilyn Bocchieletti from Thorold are saying that. Margaret Pratt from Port Colborne is saying that. Ron James from Thorold is saying that. C. Valenti from Thorold is saying that. Betti Michael from Port Robinson is saying just that, and so is C. Schrock from Thorold and hundreds of others.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Today is Earth Day, and I'm very proud that our government has delivered the largest green energy initiatives in Canadian history.

Under the Green Energy Act, our government's most green energy initiative is to build 186 new green energy projects. Some of these projects are in my riding. Four solar and wind projects that will be run by Ontario-based companies have been awarded contracts in Northumberland—Quinte West. These projects will boost our local economy by bringing new jobs for the construction, operation and maintenance of these green energy projects, and will provide cleaner energy for our homes.

When taken together with our earlier announcement of 510 green energy projects, these additional 186 projects will boost our green energy generation to 2,500 megawatts, enough electricity to power 600,000 homes. These investments in building green energy sources in my communities and communities across Ontario are important for the future of our province.

We all know that the world is at a crucial point in reversing climate change. We need to be part of the solution, and that means investing in green energy sources that reduce our environmental footprint. The steps our government is taking today are an important part of reducing Ontario's carbon footprint.

ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION

Mr. Frank Klees: Yesterday, the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care urged us to remind all Ontarians about the urgent need to register their consent to donate their organs or tissue.

Unfortunately, the well-intended wishes of many who have signed a donor card will never be known or acted upon, because their intention has not been formally registered on the OHIP registration data bank.

That's why I'm calling on all members of the House today to support the following resolution that will make registration both convenient and meaningful:

"That, in the opinion of this House, the government expand the opportunity for Ontarians to register as organ and tissue donors by creating an organ registration link on the ServiceOntario website, which will allow Ontarians to register as organ donors online, using their OHIP number, and that the registration will be filed in real time on the OHIP database."

This single initiative will exponentially increase organ donor registration in our province, and I'm hopeful that the government will support this proposal.

As this is National Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Week, on behalf of the PC caucus and, I'm sure, of all members of the Legislature and all Ontarians, I want to express our appreciation to Mr. Frank Markel, president and CEO of Trillium Gift of Life Network, and his staff for their dedication to making organ and tissue donation the gift of life for many Ontarians.

1310

CULTURE DAYS

Mr. Bob Delaney: Earlier this week, a new and innovative Culture Days initiative launched Canada-wide. Our Ontario arts and culture scene attracts travellers and art lovers from around the world. From theatres to museums, festivals to art galleries, music to dance, Ontario has it all.

Culture Days is a national collaborative volunteer movement to raise the awareness, accessibility, participation and engagement of all Canadians in the arts and cultural life of their communities. The new Culture Days initiative is based on the success of the existing Journées de la culture in Quebec, which began a decade ago. Quebec's experience has shown that Journées de la culture attracts some 300,000 participants annually.

Culture Days will allow individual communities to mobilize amateurs, enthusiasts and professional performers to showcase events like free talks and workshops, interactive events and performances. The project encourages people to become more engaged and involved with local arts and culture.

Ontarians will get personally involved in the arts scenes in their own communities in any way they can imagine. In the GTA, Classical 96.3 FM will be there to tell us about it and to keep Ontario at the forefront of the arts scene.

LEARNING ENRICHMENT FOUNDATION

Mrs. Laura Albanese: It is with great pleasure that I rise in the House today to talk about the Learning Enrichment Foundation in York South–Weston. LEF is one of our most active organizations and a service leader. For over 28 years, the Learning Enrichment Foundation has worked to represent the needs of our community by offering vital employment services, job training, language and literacy programs, child care and a wide range of services to newcomers.

Minister of Children and Youth Services Laurel Broten and I recently had a chance to see the high quality of the work performed by LEF as part of a tour of their facilities. This included a visit to their child care centre in York South–Weston.

As announced in the 2010 Ontario budget, our provincial government will be providing an ongoing investment of \$63.5 million annually to permanently fill the gap left by the federal government, which ended its commitment to provide the ongoing fund necessary to maintain about 8,500 child care spaces across Ontario. This will ensure continued access to quality child care for low-income families and agencies such as LEF so that they may participate in the workforce.

I commend the employees at LEF on their hard work and dedication to assisting the families and the entire community of York South–Weston.

PHARMACISTS

Mr. Ted Arnott: The government's time allocation motion with respect to Bill 16 is especially troubling, given that the important budget bill will be sent to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, and that important committee will only have one day of public hearings to listen to the people on the budgetary policy of the government. We know that contained in Bill 16 are the provisions that will negatively impact pharmacy in the province of Ontario.

The McGuinty Liberals have declared war on Ontario's pharmacists, and small-town residents will likely be caught in the crossfire. The Minister of Health needs to withdraw her proposals to cut pharmacy service, tone down her rhetoric and sit down with the pharmacists' association to seek common ground. If she doesn't, many of our independent pharmacies, especially those in small towns, will be the losers.

Pharmacies are integral to Ontario's health system, and patients trust their pharmacists to provide and monitor their medication. That's why this is a fight that Dalton McGuinty cannot win. We know that the health minister maintains that the changes are needed to control the cost of drugs, but she has ignored the constructive proposals that the pharmacy association has presented.

We know that Ontarians have now paid \$15 billion in health tax that Premier McGuinty promised he wouldn't levy. We seem to be paying more and more but receiving

less and less. We also know the Auditor General has criticized the McGuinty Liberals' eHealth program, which was intended to create computerized patient records. It cost \$1 billion, yet has delivered little in the way of results.

We're wasting hundreds of millions of dollars on one hand—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

Mr. Rick Johnson: Our government wants to make prescription medications more affordable for Ontarians. That's why we're introducing legislative reforms that will improve patient care. Our plan will provide patients with access to more affordable prescription drugs. We will continue to increase funding to the health care system as a whole.

There is no question that these changes need to be made. Ontarians pay more for popular generic drugs than patients in other countries. In some cases, we pay five times more than Americans for the same medications. Ontarians deserve fairer, more affordable prices, and they deserve political representatives who will stand up for their right to value for their money. With these drug reforms, our government is doing just that.

Unfortunately, the members of the opposition have failed to join us in standing up for Ontarians. Instead, they are standing up for the status quo, a professional allowance system that is open to widespread abuse and allows drug prices to be unreasonably inflated. But our government believes that these reforms are the right thing to do. We're making these changes for patients and hard-working Ontarians who are paying too much for prescription medications. Ontarians deserve a fairer deal.

REPUBLIC OF TURKEY

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: On April 23, the people of Turkey will celebrate a unique event, National Sovereignty and Children's Day.

The founder of the Turkish republic, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, dedicated April 23 to the children of the country to emphasize that they are the future of the new nation. It was April 23, 1920, during the War of Independence, that the Grand National Assembly met in Ankara and laid down the foundation of a new independent, secular and modern republic from the ashes of the Ottoman Empire. In unprecedented moves, he dedicated the sovereignty day to the children and entrusted in the hands of the youth the protection of this sovereignty and independence.

The very first Children's Day in the world was celebrated on April 23, 1929. In Turkey today, schools participate in week-long ceremonies marked by performances in all fields in stadiums watched by the entire nation. Among the activities on this day, the children send their reps to replace state officials and high-ranking bureaucrats in their offices. The President, the Prime

Minister, the cabinet ministers and provincial governors all turn over their positions to children's representatives. These children in turn sign executive orders relating to educational and environmental policies. On this day, the children also replace the parliamentarians in the Grand National Assembly and hold a special session to discuss matters concerning children's issues.

What a great example for us to follow. This coming Sunday, April 25, the Federation of Canadian Turkish Associations will be celebrating this event with performances by hundreds of Turkish and Canadian children. All of us will receive an invitation.

In the east gallery today, helping us to celebrate this International Children's Day, are the new consul general of the Republic of Turkey, Mustafa Bilgen; Mr. Mehmet Bor, the president, Federation of Canadian Turkish Associations; Mr. Ismail Vataner, the vice-president of that federation; Mr. Gelal Uçar, president of the Turkish Culture and Folklore Society; Mrs. Yildiz Ünsal, director of the Turkish Federation Community Foundation of Canada; and Mr. Ahmet Gökgez, president of the Istanbul Technical University Alumni Association. To them we say:

Remarks in Turkish.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I think after today it might be most interesting to replace all the members with children for one day. The principal would gladly love to see any one of you sit in the chair for a question period.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I think we would start with the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Mr. Bob Delaney: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 231, An Act to amend the Election Act and the Election Finances Act / Projet de loi 231, Loi modifiant la Loi électorale et la Loi sur le financement des élections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Mr. Michael Prue: I beg leave to present the first report, 2010, from the Standing Committee on Regu-

lations and Private Bills and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Prue presents the committee's report and moves the adoption of its recommendations.

Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. Michael Prue: Very briefly, Mr. Speaker. The committee worked together on this very onerous task; it looked at those items that were brought before it and makes recommendations to the House.

Having said that, I move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Prue has moved adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Debate adjourned.

1320

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed. Minister?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice for ballot item 19 be waived.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

EARTH DAY

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: It is my pleasure to rise in the House to ask members to join me in recognizing the 40th anniversary of Earth Day. Happy Earth Day.

Every day we benefit from what the earth gives us: the air, water and food that sustain us. Earth Day offers us an opportunity to notice and appreciate nature.

Protecting and ensuring the sustainable use of our natural resources is my formal responsibility as the Minister of Natural Resources. It's a responsibility I don't take lightly, and it's a responsibility that I'm proud to share with all Ontarians.

I would like to share news with the members about two initiatives that promote a healthier, greener province.

Today, we issue a new Natural Heritage Reference Manual for Ontario. This manual contains important new guidelines to protect our natural heritage. When we plan how land will be used, we must do so in a thoughtful way that respects and protects our rich natural heritage. This second edition of the manual provides guidance for

implementing the 2005 provincial policy statement. It guides how the natural heritage policies contained in that document should be implemented.

Ontarians want their communities to remain healthy, attractive, strong and viable. That means planning for natural heritage on a system-wide basis to conserve the province's natural heritage when making land use planning decisions.

This manual is a key tool for integrating the conservation of our biodiversity into land use planning, as identified in Ontario's biodiversity strategy. It supports the implementation of the Endangered Species Act and reflects the objectives of our action plan on climate change. This updated manual will be a valuable tool for municipalities and others involved in municipal planning.

I would like to thank the many organizations and individuals who provided suggestions to my ministry for inclusion in this manual. I would especially like to recognize the participation of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario; the Building Industry and Land Development Association; Conservation Ontario; the Ontario Federation of Agriculture; the Ontario Heritage Trust; Ontario Nature; the Ontario Professional Planners Institute; the Ontario Stone, Sand and Gravel Association; and the school of planning at the University of Waterloo.

The new Natural Heritage Reference Manual is now available online.

This Earth Day is also celebrating the anniversary of another initiative. A year ago, we launched our online tree atlas. It's a wonderful resource for students, parents and teachers, full of information about Ontario's native trees. That also makes it a useful tool for anyone who's interested in planting a tree. To make it even better, we are adding advice on the most appropriate native trees for homeowners in northern Ontario. You can find the atlas at ontario.ca/treetatlas. The website includes the ability for a two-way conversation between the ministry and Ontarians so they can share their tree planting stories.

As part of our Plant a Tree challenge, individuals, schools and community groups have planted almost half a million trees. I urge members who are planting a tree this month, and indeed all Ontarians, to share their stories with us at ontario.ca/plantatree.

I'm pleased to share news of these two important initiatives with my colleagues in the House. I hope all Ontarians will take the time on this Earth Day to celebrate the gifts nature gives us and to recognize the importance of protecting our natural resources.

ONTARIO COACHES WEEK

Hon. Margaret R. Best: Later today I will have the pleasure of hosting a reception to honour coaches throughout Ontario, in celebration of Ontario Coaches Week 2010.

I take this opportunity to congratulate the Coaches Association of Ontario, the CAO, for their work in planning this important week. We value the CAO's role

as a coordinating body for amateur and high-performance coaches.

This year, Ontario Coaches Week coincides with National Volunteer Week. While many coaches take on this noble duty as a profession, many coaches are volunteers and are great examples for all of us. Indeed, this week is an opportune time for us all to take an active role in our communities. One way to do that is by picking up a whistle, the theme of coaches week.

The Ministry of Health Promotion recognizes the numerous benefits of participating in sport and physical activity. Active living enhances quality of life, promotes a greater sense of well-being, and builds stronger communities.

This government continues to support amateur sport for the health of individuals and to strengthen our communities, and coaches play an integral role in achieving our goal of a healthier Ontario.

Coaches are role models, mentors and dedicated individuals. From the parent who coaches their child's baseball team, to coaches who watch with pride as their athletes compete in the Ontario Summer Games, the Ontario Winter Games, the Ontario ParaSport Winter Games, the Canada Games and, recently, the Vancouver Olympic Winter Games, they are key to helping children learn teamwork and develop self-confidence.

Coaches not only help athletes pursue athletic excellence, but they can also play a role in individual athletes' success. That is why the McGuinty government is committed to supporting coaches.

Since 2003, funding to amateur sport has increased through initiatives such as our Quest for Gold program, with a government investment of up to \$52 million to sport in Ontario. Over the past year alone, the McGuinty government has provided over \$1 million to fund coaches in Ontario. The Coaches Association has received funding to train and educate coaches through programs like the national coaching certification program and the enhanced coaching program.

Throughout the week, the Coaches Association of Ontario has been offering free coach training for individuals of all ages and athletic abilities, for experienced and new coaches. Courses are available for those who want to coach women and girls, children, athletes with disabilities, and those in remote or underserved communities.

We value the role that coaches and the Coaches Association of Ontario play in helping us achieve our goal of building a healthier Ontario, and we value their role in supporting sport and recreation across the province.

I would like to take a moment to acknowledge the coaches and Coaches Association of Ontario members again, who will be attending the reception and who are here with us in the gallery.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Tell us where it is.

Hon. Margaret R. Best: I certainly will let you know where it is as soon as I'm finished with my statement.

I think it is appropriate to give them a round of applause and respect for their continued efforts to inspire, mentor and motivate so many Ontarians.

Ontario Coaches Week is a celebration of the values and benefits of sport in our communities. Leadership, teamwork and respect are some of the values that coaches embody and share, values that will serve their athletes well in sport and throughout their entire lives.

As excitement builds for the 2015 Pan American Games and Parapan American Games, aspiring athletes all across Ontario will be pushing themselves to be the best and to emulate their sport heroes and sheroes. Behind those athletes will be coaches bringing out the best in each and every one of us.

In closing, I want to thank and congratulate coaches all across Ontario. And I take this opportunity to congratulate Ontario's male and female coaches of the year, Anthony McCleary and Wendy Morgan.

I also want to encourage Ontarians to show support for all coaches and consider picking up a whistle and becoming role models in their communities.

Interruption.

Hon. Margaret R. Best: Coaches, this one is for you.

1330

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I think the minister just got the yellow card. She knows that that was out of order.

Responses?

EARTH DAY

Mr. Norm Miller: It's my pleasure to respond to both ministerial statements today.

I guess I'll start with the Ministry of Natural Resources statement, and I certainly want to recognize that today is the 40th anniversary of Earth Day. But there are many questions that I have as to what the Ministry of Natural Resources, which was once a great ministry, is up to these days.

Way back in 1977, my father had the pleasure of being the Minister of Natural Resources. In fact, he served as a few different ministers, but that was his favourite ministry. That summer, or that year, he went about the province and learned the ministry by actually trying to meet every employee of the Ministry of Natural Resources. I still run into people who worked for the Ministry of Natural Resources who remember that. He also stated that when a minister made a decision, it was actually carried out by the civil service, which was not always the case with other ministries.

But what are we seeing now? We're seeing that the McGuinty government has actually scrapped the fish and wildlife division of the Ministry of Natural Resources, and I think that has raised some real alarm bells in the outdoor community.

We're seeing that the special purpose account, to which the money is supposed to be dedicated—the special purpose account is for the money that comes from all the fees and the hunting and fishing licences, and it's all supposed to go back into activities to preserve the environment and to Ministry of Natural Resources

expenses. There hasn't been a report done on that special purpose account. In fact, we just recently learned that the HST—and there was never any tax on hunting or fishing licences previously—is going to be applied on fishing and hunting licences in Ontario. The minister writes to the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters that, as required by legislation, the Ministry of Natural Resources will apply the HST to all licences and fees, including fish and wildlife and Ontario park fees, and that the money will be remitted to the federal government. It won't be going to the special purpose account, and that's a real blow for the outdoor communities and those who care about the natural Ontario.

I'm rushing a little bit because I still have my other statement to respond to. I did want to get something in about the Endangered Species Act, which was mentioned in the minister's statement. I would just say that I, as the critic, was led down the garden path on that when I was told the Crown Forest Sustainability Act would apply and that the Endangered Species Act would not override it. I think the past minister—and I don't blame the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane—two ministers ago was also under that belief. I will leave it at that and switch to coaches week.

ONTARIO COACHES WEEK

Mr. Norm Miller: I'd simply like to say to the minister that the opposition are waiting for our invitation to the reception. To the guests here today, we would love to come to the reception. However, so far we haven't been invited.

But I would like to recognize the good work that coaches do around the province of Ontario. They have a huge influence on many young people. They teach the skills of sport, including the value of teamwork, the discipline and reward that come from the hard work and perseverance and training.

In my youth, the one sport I took up was downhill skiing. I had the pleasure of having—our phys. ed. teacher was also our coach. His name was Lanny McQuain. He did a wonderful job of getting individual skiers to think more about the team, and we had some success as a result of that.

Three of my four kids played hockey, and I had the pleasure over 15 years to be involved in coaching, with my limited coaching abilities, and to act as a trainer and do other things on their hockey teams and other hockey teams. Certainly, I've seen first-hand the hard work that coaches do in many sports, whether it's soccer or swimming or the paragames or cross-country skiing, so many different activities out there. I would like to congratulate and thank those coaches, because they make a big difference out there. I know they are very dedicated. They're getting up in the middle of the night to be at those 6:30 a.m. practices and do so many different things for the activities they are involved with.

In many cases, if a young person is involved in sport at a young age, they will develop a healthy lifestyle and

stick with the enjoyment of doing things and being involved the rest of their life, and that is a real benefit for all of us.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses.

Mr. Paul Miller: Like the member for the opposition party—he's the critic for sports and I'm the critic for the third party. I guess I lost my invitation; I don't know. I can't find it. I just found out about it today, but that's okay.

Mr. Peter Kormos: No, it's not.

Mr. Paul Miller: Well, I'm a little hurt, but anyway.

This is a response to the minister's statement on sports. I join my colleagues in congratulating the many men and women who volunteer their time to coach individuals, teams and other groups in a variety of sports, arts, school studies, physical fitness and many other activities. My goodness, we even have life and financial; we have healthy living and many other new coaching fields that are opening up, so the business is expanding.

Coaches can be such positive influences on our youth and such good supports for us as we age. Our most recent display of coaching excellence was shown event by event, day by day during the weeks of the Olympic and Paralympic sporting events. Many of those athletes began their career path because of the positive influence of their coaches during their formative years.

As a young person with an ingrained love of sports, I can remember the many coaches who helped me to refine my abilities, to focus my attention and to execute the technique so that I could become a confident competitor. Certainly, there were some very tough coaches who pushed me harder than I felt was needed, but that extra push made me successful and helped me to develop as a competitor and as a person.

When I reflect on the many coaches I had as a young boy, as a teen and as an adult, I think of how we just accepted that they were there, without really appreciating their time, their effort and the commitment these coaches made, day in and day out, year in and year out. On reflection, I realize they were the glue of so many activities that we just knew would be there for us to participate in. What a shock it would have been if they weren't there for one season.

I'm very honoured to thank the many coaches who influenced my life, my community and my province as we celebrate the fifth coaches week in Ontario. During this week, coaches across our province are recruited, developed and celebrated, and I join my colleagues in thanking and congratulating the many coaches who volunteer their time, improving individuals, teams and activities that make our communities stronger and safer places to grow.

EARTH DAY

Mr. Michael Prue: In response to the minister on the Natural Heritage Reference Manual announcement, I'm pleased to speak to the importance of protecting Ontario's vast and valuable natural heritage, and I hope this

new edition brings clarity to the people of Ontario about what we need to protect a wonderful and unique natural heritage—I think, unique in all of the world.

But I am not terribly optimistic—I wish I was—because of what is happening in Ontario today. Ontario is continuing to lose much of its best farmland. We have the best farmland in all of Canada, and in fact, most of it is in southern Ontario. But it is under threat. Some 600,000 acres of farmland were lost to development between the years 1996 to 2006, the most recent year for which there are statistics. I think this government is not—although they are doing something, they are not doing enough to control urban sprawl.

The vast majority of lower-tier municipalities have yet to sign on to conform to the Places to Grow Act. I don't know why that's the case, but it is in fact true. The government has not done much to strike down the backroom deals with developers, such as what is taking place at Bradford West Gwillimbury, allowing them to pave over prime farmland. This government is refusing to ban developer lawsuits against citizens' groups, which prevent citizens from speaking up against urban sprawl. That was part of your legislation which allowed developers to do that—and now, by proposing to water down environmental approvals and further reduce public participation as part of its Open Ontario business-friendly thrust. Sprawl is so bad in southern Ontario that Victor Doyle, a senior planner for municipal affairs, wrote a personal letter to the Minister of Infrastructure condemning the government's Simcoe growth strategy last December.

Ontarians value their heritage; they value their natural heritage. They want to protect it for their children. They want to protect it for the future. They want to do everything possible.

1340

I commend the minister for this volume if it helps even one bit. But I think the government also has to do more than just put out a volume for the public. They have to start taking actions that are stronger than we have taken in the past. They have to start taking actions to protect our farmland, to protect our environment and to make sure that this is a heritage for all mankind.

PETITIONS

POWER PLANT

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I've got a petition signed by over 40 members of the medical community in Oakville. It reads this way:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas, in view of the recent natural-gas-fired explosion in Connecticut and the placement in Ontario of such facilities in close proximity to homes and schools;

"Whereas, in view of the absence of enforceable standards for the level of fine particulate matter in ambient air since it was declared a toxic substance one

decade ago under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act;

"Whereas, in view of the premature mortality and adverse health effects, largely attributable to fine particulate matter, which may arise from large natural-gas-fired generation facilities close to population centres;

"We, the undersigned physicians, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to institute the following:

"(1) A moratorium on the development of all natural-gas-fired power plants until appropriate safety setbacks are legislated.

"(2) The legislation of regulatory standards for fine particulate matter and the further regulation of precursor gaseous pollutions that contribute to its secondary formation.

"(3) A requirement that all natural-gas-fired power plants undergo an individual environmental assessment."

I agree with this, and even though I'm not a physician, I'm going to sign it.

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

Mr. Jim Wilson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Tim Hudak and the Ontario PC caucus support public health care and protecting access to front-line care;

"Whereas Ontario families have already given Dalton McGuinty \$15 billion in health taxes, which was wasted on the \$1-billion eHealth scandal. Now the McGuinty Liberals are cutting front-line public health care and putting independent pharmacies at risk;

"Dalton McGuinty's cuts will:

"—reduce pharmacy hours during evenings and weekends;

"—increase wait times and lineups for patients;

"—increase the out-of-pocket fees people pay for their medication and its delivery; and

"—reduce critical patient health care services for seniors and people with chronic illnesses such as diabetes, heart disease and breathing problems;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government stop its cuts to pharmacies."

I agree with this petition, and I'll sign it.

IDENTITY THEFT

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: This petition has been received from Mr. Barnabie, who's the president of the association that is responsible for Consumer Reports. It reads as follows:

"Whereas identity theft is the fastest-growing crime in North America;

"Whereas confidential and private information is being stolen on a regular basis, affecting literally thousands of people;

"Whereas the cost of this crime exceeds billions of dollars;

"Whereas countless hours are wasted to restore one's good credit rating;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, demand that Bill 7, which passed the second reading unanimously in the Ontario Legislature ... be brought before committee and that the following issues be included for consideration and debate:

"(1) All consumer reports should be provided in a truncated (masked-out) form, protecting our vital private information such as SIN and loan account numbers.

"(2) Should a consumer reporting agency discover that there has been an unlawful disclosure of consumer information, the agency should immediately inform the affected consumer.

"(3) The consumer reporting agency shall only report credit inquiry records resulting from actual applications for credit or increase of credit, except in a report given to the consumer.

"(4) The consumer reporting agency shall investigate disputed information within 30 days and correct, supplement or automatically delete any information found unconfirmed, incomplete or inaccurate."

Since I agree with this petition, I'm delighted to sign it as well.

POWER PLANT

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that has been signed by thousands of residents of Oakville.

"Whereas the province of Ontario, through the Ontario Energy Board, has selected a location for a gas-fired electrical generating power station within three kilometres of 16 schools and more than 11,000 homes; and

"Whereas the Oakville-Clarkson airshed is already one of the most polluted in Canada; and

"Whereas no independent environmental assessment has been completed for this proposed building location; and

"Whereas Ontario has experienced a significant reduction in demand for electrical power; and

"Whereas a recent accident at a power plant in Connecticut demonstrated the dangers that nearby residents face;

"We, the undersigned, petition the government of Ontario to immediately rescind the existing plan to build a power plant at or near the current planned location ... on Royal Windsor Drive in Oakville and initiate a complete review of area power needs and potential building sites, including environmental assessments and a realistic assessment of required danger zone buffer areas."

I agree with the petition. I'm pleased to sign my name to it and pass it to page Mitchell.

POWER PLANT

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I've got a petition that is signed by a lot of members who are in the audience today.

"Whereas Ontario does not have legislation that mandates separation distances between natural gas power plants and residential communities;

"Whereas experts have suggested there are considerable health concerns associated with the emissions from natural gas power plants, such as PM_{2.5}, which has been linked to decreased lung function, development of chronic bronchitis, and cardiovascular events such as heart attacks and strokes;

"Whereas public safety concerns have been raised about locating natural gas power plants in residential neighbourhoods following the explosion at a facility in Middletown, Connecticut;

"Whereas the Ontario Power Authority has selected a site to build a 945-megawatt natural gas power plant that is 320 metres from the nearest school, less than 400 metres from a residential community;

"Whereas Bill 8, An Act to establish separation distances for natural gas power plants, was introduced into the Ontario Legislature;

"Whereas Bill 8 would prohibit the construction of a natural gas power plant unless the facility is located a minimum of 1,500 metres away from any land zoned for residential use or any land on which an educational facility, day nursery or health care facility is located;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That all members of provincial Parliament support Bill 8, An Act to establish separation distances for natural gas power plants."

I obviously agree with this, will sign it and send it down with Tudor.

ELMVALE DISTRICT HIGH SCHOOL

Mr. Jim Wilson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Elmvale District High School is an important part of the community of Elmvale and surrounding area; and

"Whereas the school is widely recognized as having high educational requirements and is well known for producing exceptional graduates who have gone on to work as professionals in health care, agriculture, community safety, the trades and many other fields that give back to the community; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty promised during the 2007 election that he would keep rural schools open when he declared that 'Rural schools help keep communities strong, which is why we're not only committed to keeping them open—but strengthening them'; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty found \$12 million to keep school swimming pools open in Toronto but hasn't found any money to keep an actual rural school open in Elmvale;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Education support the citizens of Elmvale and flow funding to the local school board so

that Elmvale District High School can remain open to serve the vibrant community of Elmvale and surrounding area."

I agree with the petition, and I will sign it.

FIREARMS CONTROL

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: The petition on identity theft that I read previously was given to me by the consumer federation of Canada, not the association responsible for Consumer Reports. I'd like to straighten out that record.

I have a petition the subject of which is, "Stop Unlawful Firearms in Vehicles," that was introduced to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario under Bill 56. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the growing number of unlawful firearms in motor vehicles is threatening innocent citizens and our police officers;

"Whereas police officers, military personnel and lawfully licensed persons are the only people allowed to possess firearms; and

"Whereas a growing number of unlawful firearms are transported, smuggled and being found in motor vehicles; and

"Whereas impounding motor vehicles and suspending driver's licences of persons possessing unlawful firearms would aid the police in their efforts to make our streets safer;

"We, the undersigned citizens, strongly request and petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass Bill 56, entitled the Unlawful Firearms in Vehicles Act, 2008, into law, so that we can reduce the number of crimes involving unlawful firearms in our communities."

I certainly agree with this petition, and I'm delighted to send it to you through page Harry.

1350

TAXATION

Mr. Jim Wilson: "Whereas the hard-working residents of Simcoe-Grey do not want a harmonized sales tax (HST) that will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

"Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for, to name just a few, gasoline for their cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, condo maintenance fees, fast food under \$4, electricity, newspapers, magazines, stamps, theatre admissions, footwear less than \$30, home renovations, gym fees, audio books for the blind, funeral services, snowplowing, air conditioning repairs, commercial property rentals, real estate commissions, dry cleaning, car washes, manicures, Energy Star appliances, vet bills, bus fares, golf fees, arena ice rentals, moving vans, grass cutting, furnace repairs, domestic air travel, train fares, tobacco, bicycles and legal services; and

"Whereas the blended sales tax will affect everyone in the province: seniors, students, families and low-income Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty Liberal government not increase taxes for Ontario consumers."

I will sign that petition and I also happen to agree with it.

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas multiple sclerosis (MS) is a debilitating disease affecting a great number of people in Ontario; and

"Whereas there has been a new treatment discovery called the liberation treatment, which addresses chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency (CCVI) and that has been seen to provide relief for many MS sufferers,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario invest in research regarding this new treatment and make it available to victims of MS in Ontario as a listed procedure in a timely manner."

I agree with this petition, will affix my signature to it and send it to the table with page Owen.

GO TRANSIT TUNNEL

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I promise this is my last petition today, but I had to get this in before the time elapses. It's actually to the Minister of Transportation, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas GO Transit is presently planning to tunnel an area just south of St. Clair Avenue West and west of Old Weston Road, making it easier for GO trains to pass a major rail crossing; and

"Whereas TTC is presently planning a TTC right-of-way along all of St. Clair Avenue West, including the bottleneck caused by" this "dilapidated St. Clair Avenue-Old Weston Road bridge; and

"Whereas this bridge" and its underpass "will be: (1) too narrow for the planned TTC right-of-way, since it will leave only one lane for traffic; (2) it is not safe for pedestrians (it's about 50 metres long). It's dark and slopes on both east and west sides, creating high banks for 300 metres; and (3) it creates a divide, a no man's land, between Old Weston Road and Keele Street. (This was acceptable when the area consisted entirely of slaughterhouses, but now the area has 900 new homes);

"Therefore we, the undersigned, demand that GO Transit extend the tunnel beyond St. Clair Avenue West so that trains will pass under St. Clair Avenue West, thus eliminating this eyesore of a bridge with its high banks and blank walls. Instead it will create a dynamic, revitalized community enhanced by a beautiful continuous cityscape with easy traffic flow."

Since I agree, I'm really delighted to present this petition to you. I'm going to give it to Tara to present it to you.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

ENHANCING THE ABILITY OF INCOME SUPPORT RECIPIENTS TO BE FINANCIALLY INDEPENDENT ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 REHAUSSANT L'AUTONOMIE FINANCIÈRE DES BÉNÉFICIAIRES DU SOUTIEN DU REVENU

Mr. Barrett moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 23, An Act to amend the Ontario Disability Support Program Act, 1997 and the Taxation Act, 2007 /
Projet de loi 23, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur le Programme ontarien de soutien aux personnes handicapées et la Loi de 2007 sur les impôts.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Good afternoon, everyone. I appreciate the opportunity to explain a bit about Bill 23, a bill to enhance the ability of people on disability—those on support—to be more financially independent.

The purpose of the proposed legislation is several-fold: first, to encourage employers to take on more people with disabilities by providing employer tax reductions; secondly, to allow recipients who are working to keep more of their earnings; thirdly, to allow recipients basically to have more money in the bank, to retain more assets; and lastly, to allow ODSP recipients to retain any child support payments instead of having them clawed back by the program.

I will point out that this is not a spending initiative—if it was, it would not qualify as a private member's bill; this is an incentive for people to work, to save and also to foster employment.

This winter, one could not help but be touched by seeing Alexandre Bilodeau and his brother Frédéric. His brother was born with cerebral palsy. "He's been an inspiration for me since I was so young," Alexandre said of his brother after clinching Canada's first gold medal at Vancouver in that triumphant moment they shared at the bottom of the moguls. These brothers became my Olympic heroes. Alexandre's and Frédéric's story reminds us that life is not perfect and can be downright difficult for those with disabilities.

Members present will certainly know that our constituency offices are so often busy trying to help people wade through the myriad of rules and requirements with regard to ODSP. As we all know, the myth that ODSP is a program designed to pay lazy people to stay at home is exactly that; it's a myth.

Currently, government legislation and regulation, in my view, inadvertently encourage recipients to be more

dependent rather than independent. The government, as we know, has asked the Social Assistance Review Advisory Council to provide it with immediate advice on quick changes that could be made to ODSP: changes that would not require lengthy study and time frames to implement.

The bill we're debating today also falls in line with recommendations from associations like Community Living Ontario and the ODSP Action Coalition, and I know that there are a number of people here today from the Schizophrenia Society of Ontario. According to Community Living Ontario, the ODSP Action Coalition and other groups, a broad strategy is needed to address disincentives for employment, to enable ODSP recipients to keep more of what they earn as well as to enable asset-building strategies. This bill, in my view, does just that. It would enable recipients to build their own capacity to escape the cycle of poverty that the rules and regulations have oftentimes thrown at them—again, through no fault of their own.

For example, there are about 120,000 people alone in Ontario who have an intellectual disability, and that group experiences much higher levels of poverty as a group than any other sector of society. In fact—and I think these figures came to us from the finance committee—73% of these folks live below the poverty line.

This past February, I put forward a motion at the finance committee pre-budget hearings calling for three things: (1) encourage further employment of ODSP recipients, (2) allow recipients to keep more of their earnings, and (3) allow recipients to retain more assets. I was quite heartened that this motion received support from all three political parties on the finance committee. It passed the vote, and further to that, it did receive unanimous consent to be formally submitted by the finance committee to Gail Nyberg's social assistance review advisory group.

Since I introduced this legislation on March 31, I have been getting lots of emails of support and thanks for an initiative like this. I don't consider this my initiative; this has come from so many other people I have attempted to recognize.

1400

Many of the emails are from people who are on Ontario disability support themselves. Many are from parents who continue to care for children, and from parents who also continue to care for adults with disabilities. Many ODSP recipients have family; they have friends. They do their utmost to support them, but what happens when those supports are no longer there?

The Ontario disability support program is obviously one we cannot do without. However, there is a pressing need for a few changes to bring it into the times. While ODSP may have met the needs of Ontarians in the past, today many recipients feel they are being condemned to a life of a lower income and squeezed assets. It's scooping their child support payments and discouraging them from working, as well as providing little incentive for employers to enhance the abilities that are there.

For example, the Job Opportunity Information Network has a vision of a society in which persons with disabilities are part of an inclusive network. This is a GTA-based group, and I'll quote information I received from the group: "Witness, day after day, the tremendous determination, the ability and talent that citizens with a disability are able and want to contribute to the Ontario workforce." So that's one reason I thought it was important to have a tax credit for small business and other companies who choose to hire ODSP recipients.

In 2009, a COMPAS survey showed that 26% of employers said the perceived expense related to hiring an employee with a disability discouraged them. Again, I feel that this bill is a starting point to attempt to alleviate that kind of concern.

Bill 23, the Enhancing the Ability of Income Support Recipients to be Financially Independent Act, in my view, does exactly that: It enhances. The bill provides for those on ODSP to earn and then to keep more of their own money. Many folks on ODSP obviously want to work at least part-time. They appreciate the satisfaction that comes from earning money, from being part of the team—being in the lunchroom, for example—and contributing to their community.

The other fact of the matter is that trying to run a household on an ODSP income is virtually impossible. However, as it stands now, working ODSP recipients have their wages clawed back by 50%. Again, this provides very little incentive to work.

This bill suggests that working recipients retain the first \$700 of additional monthly income, or \$1,000 if there is a spouse. It raises asset limits from the current \$5,000 to \$12,000 for individuals, or \$20,000 if there is a spouse also on disability, and also allows recipients to retain child support income. Right now, child support is deducted, dollar for dollar, from ODSP cheques.

I have a quote from Nancy Vander Plaats. Nancy is co-chair of the ODSP Action Coalition.

Mr. Michael Prue: She's up there. There she is, right up there.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Oh, okay. I missed Nancy. Good, good. Your words, Nancy: "We've been advocating for rule changes like these for many years. It's good to see this coming before the Legislature."

As I've said before, since the introduction of this bill, I've been inundated with so many messages: messages from parents who are worried about their disabled children's future. I would like to read a quote from a mother from Kanata. "I strongly support these changes as they are long overdue. My daughter is on ODSP and working part-time. She is barely making ends meet because her wages are clawed back at a rate of 50%. To allow her to retain the first \$700 earned would be a tremendous step forward in helping her out of poverty. This would boost her income and her living standard."

Bill 23 is not designed to make ODSP recipients wealthy by any means, but it would allow them to enjoy some more of life's pleasures that we here certainly have the opportunity to afford.

I don't want anyone to have any thought that this could open the door for any fraudulent activity. There are obviously other ways—enforcement provisions—to prevent any of those kinds of characters from taking advantage of something like this.

An email from another mom: She writes, "I support these proposed changes 100%. With a daughter on the receiving end of ODSP who works full-time but cannot afford a car, insurance or some of the items others take for granted, like cable TV or a safe place to live, this change, if passed, will empower her, help with self-esteem issues and hopefully give her hope that even though she has a disability she isn't penalized for wanting to work full-time."

In closing, in my view, most people on ODSP don't want to rely on the program completely. However, I see a situation where government makes it difficult for them to be more on their own. The nickel-and-diming of recipients, if you will, with so many of the other rules and regulations and red tape that I haven't discussed today, is counterproductive. Society must do whatever it can to decrease the obstacles placed in the way of those who struggle on a daily basis, especially those on disability, so that they can live with dignity and, in many cases, independently. We have an opportunity, those of us in this House, to lead by example on this particular issue.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: I am honoured to stand here and speak in support of this bill. Oftentimes in this Legislature, I feel that I am a lone voice, so I welcome my colleague for this bill and for the initiative that he has taken.

I know it was only a number of years ago when people were in this Legislature talking about those on welfare with disdain, talking about those who were suffering on ODSP with disdain and trying to take away the very assets that they enjoy—taking away up to 31% of the payments that were made to them to make sure that they lived a life of even more miserable poverty than they had become accustomed to. I look around, in the years that I have been here—and it's closing in on nine years now—at the very little progress or almost no progress that has been made on behalf of the poor.

I would like to contrast what my friend here from Haldimand–Norfolk is doing versus what the government is doing. I think he deserves special commendation because, to be quite blunt, I didn't think I'd ever see a time in my life when a Conservative would be standing here with such a progressive bill.

Mr. Frank Klees: Oh, come on.

Mr. Michael Prue: No, no, I'm being honest. I didn't think I'd see it, but I'm seeing it, and I commend him for that. I commend him for that because it has been a real revelation to me that it shows no party boundaries.

I contrast this with what I think the government is or is not doing on this same file. I understand that Gail Nyberg will be presenting a report to the government and that the government is waiting with bated breath to the end of the

month to receive that report and then may or may not implement some of the changes that she is recommending. Since I have known Gail Nyberg for the past 25 years since she is my neighbour, my friend and a very proud East Yorker, I am trusting of her, through my conversations, that she will be making the kind of recommendations that are contained in my colleague Mr. Barrett, the member from Haldimand–Norfolk's, bill here today.

I contrast that with what the Liberals have done in government. I know these are hard economic times, but they weren't until about a year ago. I contrast that with the insistence of this government to continue the claw-back of child welfare payments that are given by the federal government to the poorest of the poor.

The monies are given to poor families. If your poor family has a modest job, earning minimum wage, you get to keep that money. But if your poor family is disabled, if they're on Ontarians with disability, that money is clawed back. I have stood so many times in this Legislature to ask why such an injustice can continue, and I have never heard a satisfactory response from a single member of the government in the last six years.

I've asked the same questions about the assets, which this bill is doing something about. A person can only have \$5,000 worth of assets before they can apply to be on ODSP or Ontario Works—\$5,000. You have to literally put yourself into penury before you are eligible to start getting money. And because you have so few assets, the probability or the possibility of you getting out of welfare and out of that vicious cycle is next to nil when and if your circumstances improve. I am pleased to see that my friend is recommending that this go to \$12,000, which is a much more reasonable limit.

1410

I look at the clawback to the disabled, which continues to trouble me enormously, and his bill deals with this as well. A person who is disabled, whom the government agrees is incapable of maintaining full-time work, is subject to a maximum of a little over \$12,000 a year on which to subsist. I don't say "live." I'm not using that word. I'm using the word "subsist," because it is a subsistence amount of money they are given: \$12,000. If they have the temerity, the unmitigated gall to go out there and find a part-time job sweeping floors, working in McDonald's, picking up an hour or two of babysitting or whatever else it is, this government has chosen to claw back half of every dollar they earn.

So you can imagine that a young man or a young woman who is born with Down syndrome—you can imagine that they have goals and needs and wants and to be with their friends and family. They want to go to movie theatres, they want to enjoy life, and they are subject to \$12,000 a year. That's all they're going to get. So if they get a part-time job, if they go to McDonald's—and I'm using them as a prime example of a corporation that is enlightened on this issue, that will hire the disabled to do work—the government takes back half of it from them, half of it every month, so that in their entire

lives, they can never get up to the level of poverty, which is about \$21,000 in Ontario. They can never get out of poverty because they had the misfortune of being born with Down syndrome or some other disease that makes it impossible for them to work.

My friend's bill will eliminate that. It will allow them to earn between \$700 as individuals or \$1,000 if there is a couple per month and keep that money without having it clawed back. That will do an amazing thing, \$700 a month. I have said that, over a year, it should be around \$8,000. The difference between the \$12,000 they get and the \$8,000 I would allow them to earn and keep—my friend is expressing \$8,400, so he's one-upped me a little—brings those people to \$20,000 a year, which is the poverty level, so that being born with Down's syndrome or some other disease is not a lifetime sentence to being incredibly and always in poverty.

I commend him for putting this forward, because this is the first opportunity, if this government listens to this—and I've been asking for it for six years, and I join my friend in asking for it today. Give people an opportunity to escape poverty. It is not their fault the way they were born. It is not their fault if they were in an industrial accident. It is not their fault if they got a disease which is not curable and renders it impossible for them to work full-time. It is our responsibility to ensure that they have a legitimate and good life that is not at subsistence level. This bill will do that.

He's talking about other things as well that he wants to do, but I am particularly incensed, because he did mention Nancy Vander Plaats, who is up there in the audience. This government is the same government that is taking those poor people who require a special diet allowance before the Human Rights Commission.

I was down there the other day to get a copy of the government affidavit in support of their action against the poor—this very government, the very action—

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Prue: Oh, they're waving me off as if this isn't important, their very action to get rid of the special diet. Do you see this? I hope you saw that, Nancy. They're waving me off as if it's not important, getting rid of the special diet allowance because it's costing the government too much money—because those people are probably abusing the system in some kind of way because they require nutritious food, and because the doctors who advocate on their behalf are probably fiddling the system. That's what this government is attempting to do.

I have to tell you, I find what they're doing reprehensible. I commend my friend that he is not getting caught in this very trap.

What he's asking for is reasonable—I've only got four minutes. He is asking that we raise the asset limit to \$12,000, or \$20,000 for a couple. It makes sense to me that someone doesn't have to fall so far and so deep into poverty that there is no hope of getting out simply because they have come to the government for assistance. This is not a lot of money. This is subsistence money for one year—\$12,000. This is poverty money for one year

at \$20,000, but that's for a couple. This is not a lot of money and it is not a lot of assets. It's the ownership of a 10-year-old beat-up car and a television that's probably eight or 10 years old and a few other minor assets like your clothes. That's all that this involves. I don't think we can ask people to do with less than that.

They are asking that child support not be included when it comes to determining the amount of money that those people get when they are eligible for welfare, and the 50% reduction is therefore eliminated. It allows for \$700 to \$1,000 of retained income. I've talked about that, and to me this is probably the single most important thing that is being put forward here: to give those who are truly disabled, to give those who are truly wanting to work and capable of doing minor forms of work, to keep the monies that they get, whether it be from a sheltered workshop, which is clawed back; whether it be from working in McDonald's sweeping a floor a few hours a week, which is clawed back; whether it is babysitting your neighbour's kids, which is clawed back; and to keep that to allow a modicum of humanity, of ability to maybe have some of life's small, little pleasures—going to a movie once every couple of months; having a meal out, even if it's only at McDonald's or Swiss Chalet, once or twice a year; going to a birthday party—just a modicum of human things.

He is also suggesting something else which I think is very important in terms of our tax structure. For those enlightened companies that want to hire the disabled, those that want to hire people who are on income support, it gives them a tax incentive to do so—this is an important thing—so that a company that is enlightened and wants to help the disabled, wants to help someone who is in need of government support—it gives them the incentive to go out there, to hire them and to understand the difficulties often associated, for a little while at least, in hiring someone with a disability or a severe disability that generally would render them incapable of work; to make that possibility, to make that a reality so that they can hire them, so that they can do the work, so that the company can say, "I'm not making any money off this. For me, at least in the short term, this is not the best employee I could hire," but that there is an incentive and an understanding that we as a society have that obligation to the disabled to look after them, to work with them, to give them an opportunity, to give them a sense of purpose.

I support what he is doing here today. I support with all my heart the initiative that he has taken. I thank him for what I see as a sea change perhaps; I hope it's the beginning of a sea change in this Legislature. And I hope that what he has said here today from the opposition bench, from the Progressive Conservative Party, is mirrored by what the government intends to do when Gail Nyberg comes forward with her report. You have an obligation to be every bit as good as what he's saying, or better.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I'm pleased to join in the debate this afternoon in respect to Bill 23, brought forward by the member from Haldimand–Norfolk. Both the member from Haldimand–Norfolk and myself and the member from Beaches–East York have had the opportunity to serve on the standing committee on finance over a period of time, and we certainly have had the opportunity to hear deputations at various times in regard to what the needs are.

Let me start by saying that I'm pleased to see the bill come forward. The member was kind enough to share it with me a week or so ago, so that I could look at it. I was there with him when the deputants, the witnesses, were before us. At the time, when he brought forward the recommendation, and through the discussion of that committee as he referenced, it was referred to the social assistance review committee, and I look forward, as the member for Beaches–East York said, to their report and recommendations, generally.

1420

I also want to say, in similar fashion to the member from Beaches–East York, that I wasn't here in the 1990s. I see some of my friends opposite in the Conservative Party who also weren't in this place, and probably those who were here were not necessarily part of the decision-making directly, at that point in time, in regard to what they did to social assistance support payments.

I'm hopeful and optimistic that this is not only a private members' bill but may be reflective of some different kind of thinking that existed at that time, and maybe broader thinking in that caucus and in their leadership, about how they want to, and how we in this place should respond to, those who find themselves either with disabilities or in need of social assistance. I'm hoping that is all part of the thinking that is going on.

I want to say that I support this bill. I support the broad principle of the bill, whether or not the specific numbers are right, in doing the necessary things to ensure that for those who need assistance, either long-term or in the shorter term, there are vehicles and mechanisms that provide a couple of things: one, support for an adequate living style that can't always be fully supported in the way we would like through direct government assistance, but equally, provide them with what I'll call financial dignity, which goes with the kind of personal dignity that people need. In our economy, in our culture, in our lives, we need to have some level of financial dignity, and a bill of this nature would assist in achieving that.

I am cognizant of the time—we have a number of speakers and limited time available to us—but I do want to briefly reference some of the things we have been doing over time, in essence, to address the issue of poverty, and this is certainly part of that.

I think we need to reflect on the fact that since taking office we have increased social assistance rates by some 12%, basically over almost each budget year. I think there was one that was missed, but there has been an annual increase that has raised social assistance rates by some 12% during that period of time.

Equally, and probably more important for many, particularly for children and their families, was the introduction of the Ontario child benefit. The Ontario child benefit is now providing some \$1,100 annually per child for lower-income families. So we are taking, and have been taking, significant initiatives on the poverty front, in a whole variety of areas to support those in need.

Coming back to the bill, I think the bill is important; I think the principle is important. I'm anxious, as well, to see the report by the social assistance review committee. I was pleased to see the member bring it forward, and I know that members on the committee, at least in our caucus, which I get the opportunity to lead as parliamentary assistant, were pleased to have the discussion and to offer support to the recommendation the member brought forward at that point in time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm very pleased to join in the debate today and speak in favour of Bill 23, introduced by my colleague the member from Haldimand–Norfolk, which would allow individuals who receive Ontario disability support program payments to keep more of their earnings and retain more of their assets. My colleague has recognized that life can be difficult for people with a disability. They do not choose their disability, and they certainly do not choose to be unable to work full-time.

Under our current social assistance system, individuals are being penalized for working. Being part of the working world provides many people with a sense of dignity and belonging. By allowing someone to work part-time while receiving assistance, we are helping to build confidence, resumés and, ultimately, the economy.

The Ontario Disability Support Program Act was introduced in 1998 by a Progressive Conservative government that recognized that persons with a disability have unique needs that were not being met through the general social assistance program. When John Baird served as Minister of Community and Social Services and minister responsible for children, he ensured that individuals with a disability were treated with dignity and respect. From John Baird in 1998 to Toby Barrett today, the Progressive Conservative Party understands that persons with a disability should be treated with the same dignity and respect that you and I expect to be treated with.

Asset levels for those receiving ODSP were set with this legislation in 1998 and have gone untouched in 12 years. It is simply not right to tell individuals with a disability that they are not allowed to have assets exceeding \$5,000. Bill 23 would ensure that individuals who qualify for ODSP could have assets of \$12,000, as compared to the current limit of \$5,000.

Today is the time for change. My colleague has recognized an opportunity to assist persons with a disability. By supporting Bill 23, we can make a difference for many in our province. Not only does Bill 23 provide a much-needed increase to the income threshold for persons with a disability, but it also provides incentives

for employers who hire someone with a disability. Our current system is a disincentive for those on ODSP to go out and work and contribute to their family's well-being. We have a chance to assist persons in the disability community to expand their job skills and contribute to their community and the economy of our province. We have a chance to take another step forward in eliminating the stigma that can occur to individuals with a disability.

In the short time since this bill was introduced and up to today, I've been receiving emails of support for this bill from across the province.

Community Living Ontario and the ODSP Action Coalition have been long-time supporters to change the eligibility thresholds for ODSP recipients. Community Living Ontario said in support of this bill, "This matter is one of great importance to our organization and its members. It is widely acknowledged that the system that is currently in place acts as a disincentive to work. We know that people want to work real jobs for real pay," and be able to keep that pay. "The current system hinders rather than helps people to build their own capacity to escape poverty."

Premier McGuinty was quoted in a Toronto Star article entitled "Punished for Working Too Diligently" on this very issue as saying, "Unwittingly, we have developed a policy that stomps you into the ground." The Premier has recognized that this is a problem, and when we see problems as legislators, we have a responsibility to correct them. I urge all members of this House to support Bill 23. It is important for families, for communities, for our economy and, most importantly, for individuals with a disability.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Bob Delaney: It's a pleasure to join in the debate on Bill 23, brought forth by the member for Haldimand-Norfolk. Recognizing the scope of a private member's bill, one can point out some of the areas in which it may be incomplete or indeed may overlap some of the government's initiatives. I do commend the member for the initiative, although it doesn't address some of the needs for better training or better jobs, access to affordable housing, health care or quality education: some of those other things that we need to do to advance the broader poverty issue in a more complete way. Again, its scope is restricted by the fact that it is a private member's bill.

Among the things that our government has done has been to launch a major anti-poverty initiative, which is called the Ontario poverty reduction strategy. It's focused on addressing just about all of the determinants of poverty reduction. Again, the member's bill is restricted in its scope, because it is a private member's bill. But some of the things that the government has done would include uploading costs from municipalities that previously had to be borne by individuals on their property tax bill, which makes a big difference; in fact, that totals up to \$1.5 billion by 2018. We're providing \$1,100 annually per child through the Ontario child benefit, which is an 83% increase compared to 2008; creating a new employ-

ment transition benefit; and, I think, most importantly for people who are on social assistance, extending drug, dental and vision care benefits. Some things that one of my colleagues addressed are, in fact, exempted: things like the value of your home, your RDSPs and your RESPs. You can have those assets; they're not held against you. We've ended the deduction of the national child benefit supplement in flowing through the federal working income tax benefit to all Ontarians who are receiving social assistance.

There are a number of things that the government has done that are complementary to this bill. I do commend the member for having brought it forward. I thank you very much for the time to add my comments.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

1430

Mr. Glen R. Murray: First, I want to commend the member on bringing this bill forward. I think it's an excellent piece of work and that it deserves the support of the House. Though I don't share all of the comments that the member from Beaches-East York said, I think the thrust of what he was saying was also quite pertinent. To my colleagues in government, I obviously share their concerns.

One member here accused me of being an interloper and not understanding poverty. I've always believed that this is about personal responsibility and the way that we should be respectful of each other as members, because we don't know a lot about each other's lives. Some may be surprised by this honourable member's bill because, as the member from Beaches-East York put out, it was, for some folks, a surprising source for this kind of initiative.

We have lots to do, and I think we have to take personal responsibility in our lives and with our families for the care of people who are less able. I spent most of my life, until I got older and got back into politics, as a foster parent. I fostered and adopted children who were known as level 5, who are the highest-needs kinds of kids, who are the hardest to place. I spent about 20 years of my life working until 3 o'clock in the morning on streets with children as young as 11, 12, 13 and 14, who sold their bodies in exchange for money because they were beaten and raped at home.

Our world is, sadly, filled with children and families in crisis, and when adults are in crisis, the collateral damage is the future of those children: kids with fetal alcohol syndrome, children who end up on the street with HIV. The cost to the health care system, but more importantly the total devastation of their lives, is the price of denying someone their productive potential and their quality of life. To me, this is the cruellest and most unimaginable thing we can do.

We can't simply rely on the state. I'm a practising Christian and very proud of that. One of my pastors always points out to me that if 5% of children of Christians adopted and fostered children in our cities, we wouldn't have any kids without homes; we wouldn't have any of the kids with disabilities without a safe place to call home at the end of the day.

While I believe in these institutional supports—and one of the reasons I agree with the honourable member's motion is because it empowers people; it gives them more capacity in their lives. It's a hand up, not a handout. I think the values he's expressing are honourable ones, and I'm glad to hear it. I will more than just vote for this today; I would be happy to work with the honourable member to try to realize this legislation.

The government has taken a lot of criticism. On these occasions, this becomes—as some members have done—an attack to attack everything the government has done.

I was chair of a planning committee in another city, and I negotiated with Benoît Bouchard and the provincial government the uploading of social services to the province and qualification under the old Canada assistance program. All of the municipalities got funding on social services to qualify under CAP. It was the biggest increase, I think, ever in social assistance rates.

One of the reasons I came here is that I'm hoping—because I don't plan on spending my life here; I think about two elections or 10 years is enough here, quite frankly; this is public service, not a career for me—when I leave here, we're hopefully one day in a situation where we have a negative income tax, where we actually have a floor that we put under, where we reward people for working and make the value of a dollar earned more important than a dollar handed out. The money that we hand out to people who can't work is critically precious. There are too many people who will just simply never be able to work, but people who can be marginally employed—three times, when I have been in significant hiring positions, I hired people who were in wheelchairs or had disabilities, and I watched personally how it changed their lives, restoring their dignity. Again, this is it.

But I want to talk about the government's record here a bit because I think it is fairly positive. There are almost 100,000 low-income people who used to have to pay income tax whom we're taking off the income tax rolls. That means that some of our lowest-income workers are now keeping more of their money, and that's really important.

I think there's a commitment in this government to work toward that. We have raised the minimum wage, which was \$6.85, to \$10.25, and we're continuing to do that.

The child tax credits and packages of advantages—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. The member's time has expired. Further debate?

Mr. Frank Klees: I want to thank my colleague the member for Haldimand-Norfolk for bringing this bill forward for consideration by this Legislature.

I want to say at the outset that I will, of course, be supporting this proposed legislation, because I believe that it just makes good, common sense. I think that for us in this House to send a signal that we want to encourage people with disabilities to become actively engaged, to pursue a career, is sending the right signal.

I think the existing policy has to be so incredibly disheartening for individuals who are already dealing

with the challenges of a disability. People go to the effort of finding a job, or retraining, and getting into a position of earning an income and becoming self-sufficient—because that ultimately is the objective—and then for government, at the end of the week, to say, “No, by the way, we're going to claw back” what, quite frankly, is a bare existence, in any event.

So for Mr. Barrett to come forward and say to the government that it's time we encourage people to pursue careers, to become self-sufficient, is the right thing to do. Whether it's with regard to being allowed to keep more of their income—the first \$700, as is proposed—and we can talk about whether it should be \$700 or \$1,000. I'm willing to have that discussion, and I know that my colleague is as well. The reason I say that is because all members have been asked recently to go through an exercise called Do the Math. We were challenged to go through a monthly budget, and that had to do with basically the Ontario Works budget that people are on—but I think there's an application here. I tell you, I went through that process. I looked at what it costs to live for a period of a month on the benefits that are being offered to people, whether it's social assistance or the Ontario disability support plan.

I think that we, too, have to look at what it costs for someone to live in dignity in this province. When you consider what it costs for basic rent; for food; for the increased costs we talk about in this Legislature every day, in terms of the increased costs of electricity and natural gas, the HST—there isn't a person on social assistance who is going to be exempt from the HST or the additional cost of electricity. We have a responsibility to ensure that people who are not able to look after themselves can in fact live with dignity. This is a bill that I believe goes the distance to at least ensuring that people are encouraged to be self-sufficient.

I want to wrap up my comments because I want to leave some time for my colleague Mr. Miller as well.

I want to close with a letter that was written to me. I believe it goes to the heart of the principle of this bill. I quote as follows:

“My son has Down syndrome and has recently turned 18. He is now qualified for ODSP. That sounds wonderful to be able to get some support, because other funding for” my son “as a child has been discontinued. When he turns 18 I no longer receive assistance for children with severe disabilities, nor will I get the child tax credit for children with disabilities.

1440

“I was, however, disappointed when I learned that because I am a single parent” my son's “ODSP will be clawed back by any child support I receive from his” father.

“My argument is that this arrangement was made so that I could afford to provide a home and caregiving” for my son. That is the support arrangement. “The burden of supporting” my son “will be the responsibility of both his parents. Although ODSP is government social assistance, the burden of housing with attendant care has remained

our problem, one we share with other parents of developmentally delayed and autistic children. There is presently a waiting list for residential services. I am 55 years old and I shudder to know that there are almost 1,500 aging parents, 80% over 70 years old waiting for residential support who may suddenly be unable to support their child. While we can," this woman and her son's father "will continue to provide a home for Michael." This is a challenge for many.

"In a family situation where both parents are living with the ODSP recipient, the parents' income is not disclosed. It has no bearing on the income support by ODSP. Why then would a cheque payable to me be part of my son's "income?" This bill resolves that issue.

I want to thank my colleague for bringing this forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Norm Miller: In the brief time that I have left, I just wanted to really commend the member from Haldimand-Norfolk for bringing this Bill 23 forward. He and I were on the pre-budget hearings together this January and February, travelling around the province. I know that he has, for a number of years, participated in the pre-budget consultations. When groups would come before the committee and make suggestions about allowing people on ODSP to work, earn and keep more of their money, we would always be supportive of that. I'm very pleased that he has brought forward this bill. He has addressed a number of different issues.

I just feel that a person doesn't choose to have a disability, and they shouldn't be impoverished because they have a disability. If they are able to work, then they should be encouraged to do that and they should be rewarded by being able to keep more of that income and have more assets. I note that the bill allows a modest increase in assets—I think it's up to \$12,000. That's an improvement, so I'm certainly supportive of that.

As was mentioned by the former member, he was talking about the child support, the fact that that would not lower the amount of your ODSP payment. I'm fully supportive of that as well.

I'm very pleased that the member from Haldimand-Norfolk brought this bill forward, and I will be fully supportive of it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member for Haldimand-Norfolk, Mr. Barrett, has up to two minutes for his response.

Mr. Toby Barrett: A valuable debate: After 15 years in this House, I am quite heartened by the input. I appreciate that.

The member for Beaches-East York: You and I have sat side by side on finance for a number of years. You know the numbers. There may be merit in returning to this debate, perhaps half a day of hearings on finance. Also, another fellow member, the member for Pickering-Scarborough East, the parliamentary assistant to finance: It may merit half a day of hearings just to work out some of the numbers. This is not my bill, by the way; this is

our bill. So many people have provided input, but there would be more work to be done if this was going to go forward.

Our social services critic, the member from Dufferin-Caledon: Thank you for the support, thank you for that history and thank you for the encouragement as I worked through this over the winter.

The member for Mississauga-Streetsville: I do agree; this legislation does not go far enough, recognizing that it is a private member's bill. Again, we rely on others to flesh some of this out.

The member for Toronto Centre: I appreciate the experience that was brought to this debate as a foster parent of children, as the member described, with very high needs. I was somewhat bemused: I heard an expression from the member that I don't seem to use anymore, the concept of providing a hand up rather than a handout. I never thought of it that way in this legislation, but that's partly what this is.

My colleague the member for Newmarket-Aurora is an eloquent speaker. I was so impressed with the email he read that explained, in a very fulsome way, the issue with people losing child support payments.

I appreciate the fellow to my right who sits on the finance committee, the member for Parry Sound, and his wise input as our critic for finance.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. The time for this ballot item has expired. For those in the galleries and those watching at home, we'll vote on Mr. Barrett's ballot item in about 100 minutes.

SEPARATION DISTANCES FOR NATURAL GAS POWER PLANTS ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR L'ÉTABLISSEMENT DE DISTANCES DE SÉPARATION POUR LES CENTRALES ÉLECTRIQUES AU GAZ NATUREL

Mr. Flynn moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 8, An Act to establish separation distances for natural gas power plants / Projet de loi 8, Loi établissant des distances de séparation pour les centrales électriques au gaz naturel.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Pursuant to standing order 98, the honourable member Mr. Flynn has up to 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to be able to rise in the Legislature today. I want to thank, first, all members of the Oakville public who have joined us here at Queen's Park today and made that drive down the QEW. Wait till you see the drive home. It's a little different than the drive down here, usually.

I also want to thank my colleagues who have assisted me in the preparation of this bill on all sides of the House. I want to thank the organizers from C4CA, who have done so much to bring this to the attention of both myself, members of council, members of the provincial Legislature, and members of the federal government as

well, and all those community leaders who have stepped forward on this issue, because it's an issue that I don't think my community ever expected to face. It came as a bit of a shock when an announcement was made in our community. The people who have responded really well—and I'd like to introduce them to the House: Rob Burton, mayor of Oakville, who's joined us in the east members' gallery; and a colleague of mine for 18 years on Oakville town council, representing the people of the ward and the riding where I'm from in Oakville, ward 1, Councillor Ralph Robinson. Ralph is with us as well.

The bill that's before us today, if passed, would do something very simple. It would prohibit the construction of a natural gas power plant unless that facility was located a minimum of 1,500 metres away from any land that is zoned for residential use, any land on which an educational facility is located, a day nursery or a health care facility. The proposed bill is intended, though, to allow for the construction of natural gas power plants in safe locations in communities, where they should be.

We've moved ahead, I think, in this province as we're looking at power supply and demand, and we've decided that gas-fired power plants will play a role in the provision of electricity. What we've found as we moved forward, however, is that the siting of those plants is sometimes not in the best interest of the people in that community.

Now, some people have claimed that this plant is a plant for Oakville, that somehow, because Oakville uses electricity, it should have a plant located very close to it. Oakville's demand is about 90 megawatts. This plant, members should know, is close to 1,000 megawatts. That's larger than most nuclear reactors. That's larger than any nuclear reactor in the province of Ontario, that I'm aware of. The sad fact of the matter is that currently, surprisingly, Ontario does not have any legislation that mandates the separation distances for natural gas power plants from those sensitive uses I've just outlined.

We were selected, as a result of a process that I can't say I'm entirely proud of, for the location of a 945-megawatt natural gas power plant, and that plant currently in the province of Ontario would be allowed to be built on a site where you couldn't put a three-megawatt wind turbine. There's something absurd about that. It's something that I think all members of the House should be concerned about and something that we should be able to do something about.

The plant is 320 metres from the closest school, it's 400 metres from homes, it's 60 metres to the closest business, and it's seven metres from one of the busiest railroad corridors in all of North America. The recent derailment in Pickering—those trains came off the track about 200 feet. This application had to go to the committee of adjustment to allow it to be located 7.5 metres away from the railroad tracks. Those trains would have gone through this building.

1450

You also look at the Middletown explosion, the explosion that happened down in Connecticut. If that had happened in this area, it would have been tragic.

You also look at an example we're hearing about today from Shreveport, Louisiana, where the fire chief is petitioning his council to move the fire department because a natural gas power plant is located next to the fire station. If there was an accident at the gas plant, it would blow up the fire department. The fire department wouldn't be able to respond to that. That simply makes no sense. He is urging us to do something about this.

There are a number of people who are urging us by quotes to do something about this. I want to read something from the mayor of Middletown, Connecticut. He says, "Having observed the extensive review process required by the state of Connecticut, the federal government as well as our own local regulatory commissions, I would like to encourage you to continue to insist on a careful, transparent and objective evaluation of all of the issues involved in the siting of electric power generating plants." This is the line I want everyone to pay attention to: "We were fortunate in that the Kleen plant is located in a very remote and sparsely populated area of Middletown."

Christine Magee—you've all heard her on the radio, the president of Sleep Country Canada—says, "The proposed bill identifies a gap in current regulations ... this is a common-sense measure worthy of all-party support"—somebody from our business community.

Dr. Thomas Stewart, director of critical care medicine, just down the street here, at Mount Sinai Hospital, University Health Network: "Due to these detrimental health effects, I am supportive of proposed legislation that mandates a 1,500-metre separation distance between ... gas power plants and residential communities."

Former president of Microsoft Canada, Frank Clegg: "Mr. Flynn's bill seeks to correct this problem by mandating a 1,500-metre buffer between gas-fired power plants and the communities they serve"—and what else I want every other member of this House to pay attention to—"so every community in Ontario will be protected."

Jose Etcheverry from the faculty of environmental studies up at York University: "MPP Kevin Flynn's private member bill provides Ontario with a unique opportunity to re-evaluate the suitability of large-scale polluting plants...."

Somebody everybody knows: Mike "Pinball" Clemons, the Toronto Argos' executive now and a former star player. He says, "When I have a power plant that is going to be located 300 metres from a school ... I want to say to my government that I cheer for you and I want you to make" good "decisions ... 300 metres from a school doesn't seem to be" a good decision.

Pierre Morrisette, owner of the Weather Network: "I think this approach meets the health and safety needs of communities and the energy needs of Ontario."

I could go on and on. We've got a number of people from the business community, the environmental community, the legal community who have stepped forward to say that we need to do something about this, and we have the opportunity to do something about this today.

PM_{2.5} is a health concern in my community. It has been linked in numerous medical studies to decreased

lung function, development of chronic bronchitis and cardiovascular events, such as heart attacks and strokes.

We've used a precautionary principle in establishing this 1,500-metre zone. We've looked at examples from around the world, we've looked at other jurisdictions, and we've decided that this is a good starting point. This is a starting point for a debate on establishing standards.

I want to tell you that this can happen anywhere in the province of Ontario. You could have a plant in your riding tomorrow, Speaker. Any member of this House could have a plant in their riding, this close to homes, and even closer.

There's a lack of transparency with the process as it stands today, and, simply put, site selection is not a priority. There are alternatives to this that I will outline at a future time, but certainly, we don't have to build this plant in this location.

What this will do—the import of this bill—is it will not allow for the construction of a gas-fired power plant on the Lakeview site within the community of Clarkson, nor on the Ford lands in Oakville, or on any other unsafe or unsuitable site in the province of Ontario that's within 1,500 metres of sensitive land uses.

Today, ethics are very, very important in business. What we ask business to do is ask: Is the action consistent with the company's basic duties? In this regard, it probably is. TransCanada builds power plants. Does it respect the rights and other legitimate claims of the affected parties? In this case, it doesn't. Does it reflect the best practice? This is not the best technology, and it's not the best practice.

Is it compatible with the company's own deeply held commitments? Only TransCanada and Ford can answer that, but I'll tell you what TransCanada's values are. They say, "We demonstrate high ethical standards in everything we do. We treat each other, our customers, governments and other stakeholders with honesty and respect." What I'm saying in this House is that if they are going to adhere to those ethics, they need to not build this plant in Oakville; it's that simple. If you're going to say that, you have to do that.

The other question asked from an ethical objective is, would I be comfortable if this action were described on the front page of a newspaper? It has been described on the front page of many newspapers. I don't think TransCanada is very comfortable, nor is Ford. Would I be comfortable if everyone in a similar situation did this? If this happened all over Ontario, it would be a disaster in the making. And is this how I'd like my leadership to be remembered? Ford and TransCanada need to answer those questions.

What we need to do today is establish the ground rules. When companies are going to partner with us in the generation of electricity, be it through any means—solar, wind turbines, nuclear—we need to have clear standards. What we don't have currently in place for gas generating plants is a separation distance; we don't have a buffer zone. We do for other uses, but for some reason we don't for natural-gas-fired power plants. I think it's time for us

to step up. It's the opportunity for Ontario to be a leader in safe energy.

I ask for the support of all members of the House today. I ask them to imagine, were this plant located 300 yards from their children's school, if they would want it there. I ask them to—

Mr. Michael Prue: Should have thought of that in August.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you, Michael Prue. Nice comment.

I ask you, if this was to be located 300 yards or less from a nursery school, would that be something you would make a joke about? Would that be something you would laugh about? It's very, very serious to my community. It's something that means a lot to my community.

Previous governments have tried to come to grips with the provision of energy in the province of Ontario, and we've all made various strides and advances. This is the time to make another advance. I ask for the support of all members of the House, so that we can continue to provide clean electricity to people in the province of Ontario and do it in a safe manner.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you.

First of all, I remind honourable members to refer to each other by their riding names. Secondly, members of the gallery, while we really appreciate your coming to Queen's Park today, we do not allow participation in the debate, and unfortunately that includes clapping.

Further debate?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Can I ask for unanimous consent to allow the gallery to applaud?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I suppose you can do that. Do we have unanimous consent? I hear a no.

Further debate?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I'd like to start by thanking the gallery. There are well over 300 people here from Oakville, which I think speaks seriously to how emotional and how important this issue is to the people of Oakville. It speaks volumes when 300 people take a day out of their lives to come down to Queen's Park to let the government know how seriously they feel about this.

As the member for Oakville mentioned, wait until the drive home. It's that drive home as well as the morning drive in rush hour that put the Oakville-Clarkson airshed under a lot of stress. It is one of the most stressed airsheds in Ontario; indeed in Canada, for that matter. That is not just a statistic that sits on paper. Oakville and people within the Clarkson airshed and their children under the age of 19 have the highest incidence of respiratory diseases in Canada, and that's the human element of a stressed airshed. When we talk about a stressed airshed, that's one thing. The facts supplement that and back that up, but the real effect of that is the respiratory diseases that we see in our children. Also, anybody who is in their senior years is also affected with breathing issues.

1500

This proposed plant is of 900 megawatts. That's a huge plant. If you've seen the plant on the 401, just west

of Trafalgar Road in Halton Hills, that plant is just over 600 megawatts. The Oakville plant will be a third larger than that. It will sit on 13.5 acres—I think Kevin referred to this—whereas the Halton Hills plant sits on 79 acres. It's a very, very small piece of land that the Oakville plant is proposed to sit on, and it is just that much closer to its neighbours. When this was proposed, I'm just wondering who in the government, in the bureaucracy or in the power generators would have thought that this would be a good idea.

As far as safety is concerned, again, it has been mentioned that there are 1,100 homes, 16 schools and many seniors' residences and child cares all within the limits of less than what is proposed under Bill 8. I wonder who in the decision-making process would have thought that this was a good idea.

This plant is being built because we need the electricity, or so we're told. When this plant was planned back in 2004-05, the peak demand for the province of Ontario was around 27,000 megawatts. That was on a day in July when all the air conditioners in the province were turned on. The province was operating at a fairly high level of economic activity. Over 27,000 megawatts were used on that day in July 2005. Since that time, every year the peak demand for that year has declined. That decline continued until 2009, when the peak demand was 22,000 megawatts, some 5,000 megawatts less than we used in 2005.

Certainly we're in a recession—or we have been in a recession; we're beginning to come out of that recession. Hopefully, as we come out of that recession, our electrical demands will rise again with the increasing economy. However, there has been a significant restructuring in the economy in Ontario, and that economy may not see the same demand for electricity in the future that we have seen in the past.

I've been in a lot of manufacturing facilities in my time, and the 100-horsepower electric motors that used to draw tremendous amounts of power are rapidly becoming a thing of the past. We're seeing much smaller engines and much more efficient equipment producing the same amount of products.

Whether or not we're ever going to climb back to those areas, and given that we already have a 600-megawatt plant in Halton, I seriously question whether this plant is needed now or indeed will be needed any time in the near future. If it is needed in the future, certainly there can be a location found that would be much safer, much larger and much more conducive to its operation than the place they have selected for this on the Ford lands, on such a small piece of property. I certainly remain to be convinced that we need this plant at all.

The only problem I have with this bill is that in subsection 2(3) it says this section "does not apply to a person who constructs, installs or expands a natural gas power plant if, on a day before the day this act comes into force, all of the approvals, permits and other instruments that are required under any act to construct, install or expand the natural gas power plant have been obtained."

It is on the website of TransCanada. It is suggested that they will have their ducks in a row, they'll have their instruments approved, by the end of summer or early fall of this year. That means that this bill will have to pass third reading prior to June 3, when this House rises for its summer recess. In passing this bill in that time frame, it would go a long way to protect the people of Oakville, particularly the people who live in that precise area so close to this plant. That's why I will be supporting this bill, as will the members of the PC caucus. It's for the safety, the lifestyles and the health of the people of Oakville and the people of Ontario. All the people of Ontario deserve to have that known.

Further, after this vote is taken in a little less than an hour and a half, I will ask for unanimous consent again and move that we move directly to third reading of this bill so that it will be in a position to avoid going to committee and will come back to this House in the immediate future for third reading to ensure that it gets past the legislative hurdles of being passed in this House by June 3.

I look forward to the passing of this bill. I look forward to this government supporting the passing of this bill and bringing health and safety back to Ontario and, indeed, to the residents of Oakville.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: I want to rise and I want everyone in the whole room to understand from the beginning that I will be voting yes to this bill. But I also want you to understand that over the next 12 minutes, I'm going to explain to all of you why you are here today, and why you ought not to have been here in the first place.

I've read this bill throughout; I've read it many times. I've also read all of the submissions that have been put forward by the people of Oakville. I have read what they have to say. I have read the comments that they have made. I think you have made very relevant and very real comments.

I've looked at the supporters who have signed on to the bill and the quotes that are there. There is a US mayor, there are doctors and medical people, there are businesspeople, there are academics, and there are sports heroes. There are no municipal politicians, although I am thankful that there are some in the audience here today. The reason there are no municipal politicians is that this Legislature took away the rights of the people of Oakville and the rights of the politicians of the town of Oakville to deal with this in the first place. That day was August 30, 2006, on a motion from the member from Oakville. That was motion number 94, dealing with section 23 of the Municipal Act, which took away every single right that every single citizen and every single municipality in this province had to question whether or not a plant like this was sited in their municipality. Do you all know that? The reason you are here today is because your member who was standing up for you today, and rightly so, did not stand up for you in August 2006. I have the 18-page transcript, and I invite anybody who wants it—I'll be in

room 154 when this is over—to come down and pick it up and see what was said on that day: the warnings that were given by the lawyers to the member from Oakville and his Liberal colleagues; the warnings that were given by the Progressive Conservatives who were there, my colleagues Ms. MacLeod and Mr. Hardeman; and the warnings that were given by me of what was eventually going to happen. On that day, the issue wasn't about Oakville. No, the issue on that day was what was going to happen to the gas-fired power plant in the city of Toronto, in the port lands. I was accused by the member from Oakville of being “silly,” of being “alarmist,” of saying that things were going to happen in other municipalities down the road that he wasn't going to like.

The reality is that today this has all happened to you. This is what has happened to you because this government determined on that date in 2006 that you would never again have the opportunity through your elected officials municipally, or your right as citizens, to go before the Ontario Municipal Board to challenge an abomination like this.

1510

So you are here today hoping that this Legislature will do something that is very rare, and that is to pass a private member's bill: first, second and third readings; go through committee and have it passed; and have it ordered by the government, which opposes you, and have it passed. This is very, very unlikely. When you lost was in August 2006. I am going to vote for you in the vain hope that we can resurrect that in the future, so that once again the people of Oakville can feel safe.

Just to give you some quotes—I think my colleagues from the Conservative Party later on will quote what they had to say that Mr. Flynn and his colleagues ignored in this House in 2006.

Mr. Prue: “Then perhaps I can ask Mr. Flynn—who was about to answer, saying that he wants the lights to stay on—is this an attempt to stop the city of Toronto from fighting the province on the port lands energy project? Is that what you're doing here?”

Later on, Mr. Flynn answers, “When the need to supply energy to the province of Ontario reaches a certain point, and if an impasse is reached, the government of Ontario would have the authority.” That's where he was.

We go on to some more. Mr. Hardeman to the lawyer, Mr. Schachter: “So it is as Mr. Prue suggested, then. If the objection from the city of Toronto presently is that it's improper planning and they're not going to approve the planning for it, this amendment will negate the need for that planning approval.”

Mr. Schachter, the lawyer: “That's correct, subject to compliance with the conditions that are contained in the section.”

Mr. Flynn heard that.

I went on to say: “You're taking away what you gave them”—that is, the city of Toronto. “You gave them the right for site plan approval, you gave them the right for zoning on projects, and now you are taking it away by virtue of this amendment,” to which he agreed.

I went on to say: “This means that not only is there going to be a port lands project in Toronto, but this means that every municipality in Ontario is vulnerable to whatever whim you or future governments have. There can be energy from waste if they don't want it. There can be a nuclear power plant in their downtown if you deem that that's appropriate, if they don't want it.”

Mr. Flynn: “That's silly.”

Mr. Prue: “They have lost every single ... local control if this motion is passed, and if section 23 is passed.

“What has this got to do with good planning practices? The location of energy projects needs to take into account the compatibility of the surrounding lands; it needs to take into account what the official plans of the municipalities are.” Ignored.

I went on to say—I'm just as angry today, and it's four years later—“I don't know what to say except that I am so incredibly angry—I am so incredibly angry. I don't know what you're going to say. You're probably not going to say anything in defence.”

Mr. Flynn: “I'm going to say a lot.”

Then he went on to say things like—I quote him—“That's absolute tripe.” And he went on to say: “We're proposing to extend those undertakings to any other projects around this. Already, Hydro One and OPG have this provision. I don't see a nuclear power plant in the middle of Toronto. They've had this provision for a long, long time. I don't think the alarmist stuff really serves this process at all.” He says more: “Any proposed project is not going to be placed willy-nilly. They're still subject to the Environmental Assessment Board,” which is what is happening to you.

We go on. Mr. Hardeman, a very smart man: “We thank the member from the government side for explaining the issues and the changes made to the Planning Act, but I think you totally glossed over the fact that for these purposes, for the energy purposes, you have exempted them from the Planning Act, so you've got much more government involvement but no municipal involvement in the energy ones. I think that's really the concern.”

The member from Nepean—Carleton said, “I just wanted to add a comment because we're talking about the public process and public input. I have to beg to differ with the government side on this. You'll take it as no surprise that I agree with Mr. Hardeman and Mr. Prue. You're severely inhibiting the public input in the planning process by eliminating the municipality here. You have limited debate on this piece of legislation. The city of Toronto has not seen this amendment. In fact, entire sections of this piece of legislation have been rewritten in the last two days. I'd like to know what consultation you took with the city of Toronto....” etc.

But I think the whole nub—and I've got three minutes left. We had three votes that day on this bill and on the provision that brings you here, in favour of all three motions. Ayes: Brownell—who is here today. Mr. Brownell, you remember this. Ayes: Mr. Brownell from Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry. Ayes: Mr. Flynn

from Oakville. Ayes: Mr. Lalonde from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell. Ayes: Mr. Rinaldi from Northumberland–Quinte West. Nays: Mr. Hardeman, Ms. MacLeod, Mr. Prue. The Chair: “The motion is carried.” That happened three times—three separate votes.

I was pretty angry that day. I thanked the Chair and I told them I wasn’t going support the section. I said the following in my anger, and I was angry. I want you to know, I don’t wish this upon you, but I did say it. I said this to Mr. Flynn that day:

“The screams may not be coming because everybody’s got their fingers crossed. I know they’ve got their fingers crossed: ‘Please don’t let it be me.’ They’re just hoping that of the 450 municipalities, it happens to somebody else. But I will tell you, when it happens, as it has to the city of Toronto and the port lands, there are going to be screams. When it happens, Mr. Rinaldi, in your riding, there are going to be screams. In yours, Mr. Lalonde, in yours, Mr. Flynn, and in yours, Mr. Brownell, there are going to be screams when the municipality has no say whatsoever on the siting of energy plants. People are going to wake up and they’re suddenly going to start asking why and how this has happened. We’re going to be able to point the finger pretty bluntly, because I know what’s going to happen on 23, the same as I just saw happen to the amendment: You’re all going to put your hands up,” as they did. “But I want to tell you, if fate is good—and sometimes I love fate—I hope that those energy plants end up in your ridings, and that your municipalities turn around and say, ‘We want to be consulted.’ You are the ones who are going to have to go and tell them, ‘You’re not going to be consulted, because I voted that you would never be consulted again.’ That is the reality of what you are doing.”

That is what this member did. What he is asking today, I agree with; I agree that this is an abomination. But the people of Oakville, through their legitimate council, the people of Oakville, in their own right, should have had the ability to go to the Ontario Municipal Board, should have had the ability to appeal, should have had the ability to decide whether or not this was an appropriate site, and you have taken that away from them. Nothing you can do here today is going to ever give them that right back.

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Prue: I will tell you, Mr. Flynn, you can argue all you want. You might be right today, but you were absolutely wrong, then and you owe every one of them an apology for your past actions.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): On Thursday afternoons, we do give a great deal of leeway in terms of style of debate, but I am going to start calling members if you don’t speak through the Chair. Secondly, please do not speak directly to the galleries. In the past, that has caused grave disorder in this House.

Further debate?

Mr. David Caplan: Speaker, through you, I’d like to congratulate the member from Oakville on bringing forward this measure. It was a little over a year ago that

the Legislature considered something called the Green Energy Act to attempt to try to make Ontario a leader in the provision of green energy and to support the economic development of what I think the world is describing as an emerging economy. In that bill, the government of Ontario established that there was a minimum boundary distance when you have wind turbines, that there ought to be, for health and safety reasons, a separation between wind turbines and residential neighbourhoods.

1520

The Green Energy Act calls for a 550-metre separation. I must admit that I had been under the assumption that this was consistent with other energy generation in the province of Ontario, and I was quite surprised to learn, when the member from Oakville brought this to my attention, that that was not the case; that in the case of a natural-gas-fired plant, you could be located literally next door to a residential neighbourhood, after this Legislature established a principle that there ought to be a separation, that that was in the public interest, that that was good planning principles.

So I want to congratulate the member from Oakville for bringing forward this measure, because obviously there was an oversight. Obviously, there was a gap. Obviously, there’s a need to have consistency in one provision of energy.

I don’t think anyone in this Legislature or anyone in this province would dispute that we have growing communities and a growing economy, that we are going to require electricity to fire our homes, support our businesses and support our quality of life, but that it be placed appropriately, that it be in a place where it was not interfering or conflicting with a residential setting. I was surprised that you could be located so close to a school or a hospital.

I think the member from Oakville has quite rightly brought this forward, brought this to the attention of the Legislature. I hope that this measure will be adopted here today, and by the government as it moves through its deliberations on Bill 8—or even contained within its own legislation.

This is about safety. It’s about appropriate setbacks and minimizing the safety risks that residents not simply in Oakville but residents in any part of the province of Ontario would ordinarily expect. That’s why I am quite in support of the measures contained here.

The member said that this is the beginning of a conversation. I think that’s quite right. I don’t have the technical know-how to be able to inform or the expertise to be able to extol whether one and a half kilometres is the right distance. Should it be 550 metres? Should it be more than that? Should it be less? I don’t know. But it’s important that we have this conversation, it’s important that we have this debate, and it’s important given the fact that this Legislature has already established—through its support for minimum separation distances when it comes to the provision of energy generation.

This ought to be supported, and this member, the member from Oakville, ought to be congratulated for

trying to address a historical oversight and making sure that this is now operative in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to join the debate on Bill 8 introduced by my colleague the member for Oakville. I know that his constituents are concerned about his government's plan to put a peaker plant in Oakville.

My constituents have long been concerned about this government's energy plans in York-Simcoe.

Let me state first that there is a legitimate need, understood by most, for energy in northern York region, and the government is right to recognize and work to meet this need.

Years ago, I wrote to my local councils and chambers to involve them in this necessary process. The government first tried to meet this need by building new power lines from Markham to Newmarket. This failed because of opposition in those communities. Then the government moved to build a peaker plant, holding a bidding process, and finally choosing a site in northern King township.

I note that the member for Oakville wants to ban peaker plants from coming any closer than 1.5 kilometres to a school or a residential area.

Let me inform this House that the peaker plant plan for my riding is a lot closer than 1.5 kilometres from the Holland Marsh District Christian School. The plant is right beside the Holland Marsh itself, the salad bowl of Ontario, and on the very land that you, as a government, thought vital to be included in the greenbelt.

A few short years ago, you deemed this land to be protected from intrusion. Now the government is prepared to sacrifice the principles of its greenbelt law.

So I ask, on behalf of my constituents: How can this Liberal government justify building a natural gas-fired electricity generating plant in the middle of the greenbelt on the edge of the Holland Marsh and within a short distance of a school?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Mike Colle: I just wanted to say that this is a very fragile ecoregion of southern Ontario. It's really a contrast of an incredibly beautiful place to live and raise a family, while at the same time it faces the worst impacts of uncontrolled, unbridled sprawl that has been choking this province for so many years. And so, in this respect, I am somewhat aware of the pressures on this fragile Oakville-Trafalgar area.

A number of years ago, many of you here sat in this House and voted against my bill. I can go back to history too. I had a bill called the "protect the Trafalgar moraine bill." But I'm not going to get into vilifying people. I'm going to talk about the fact that this area has incredibly sensitive ecosystems. One of them is the Trafalgar moraine: home to over 400 species, headwaters to a number of creeks and rivers. I tried to bring that sensitivity to the attention of the government at the time,

because basically it was just a western-style free-for-all and sprawl everywhere. But at least by bringing that to the attention of the people here and working together with now-Mayor Rob Burton of Oakville and Allan Elgar and "green Oakville" and Councillor Flynn, we were able to put some really good protections in place through the municipality, and I think they've done some incredibly good things with that added sensitivity. So these sensitive issues are issues that we have to grapple with. Blaming and finger-pointing and vilifying people does not solve it.

By doing what he has done, MPP Flynn—I was going to say "Councillor Flynn"—has essentially sent a very strong message to all of us that we have to do better at protecting sensitive areas when it comes to building power plants, when it comes to building wind turbines, when it comes to building or expanding nuclear power plants. We have to sensitize the decision-makers. It's not every MPP who makes these final decisions. It sends a strong message to our government and to the Ontario Power Authority and to corporate Canada that we need to have a very strong second look at this.

The 1,500-metre zone, the separation that has been proposed in this bill, is a very solid proposal that deserves our support. It sends a message that there is a way of dealing with these very difficult issues, because the reality is, we have an incredible amount of demand for power, no matter what. Sometimes, as you know, we want things both ways: We want more power, cheap power, yet we don't want the power plants near us, and that's understandable. But certainly in this modern age of high-tech digital intelligence, we could find a way where corporate Canada could build these plants that are not a threat to schools, to neighbourhoods, to very sensitive airsheds. It just sort of confounds me that they would put this very sensitive building at this incredible bottleneck that we all well know of. It is not only an automotive bottleneck and an urban sprawl bottleneck, but it's an air-quality bottleneck that can't stand this type of ad hockery when it comes to putting in this type of needed power plant. It's not the place for it.

We, as legislators, through this process that Mr. Flynn has brought forward, have an opportunity to be part of the solution and not go back and finger-point on who did what when, and when they didn't do it. We've all made mistakes; let's get it right.

1530

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: I, too, rise in support of the member from Oakville in terms of what he has put forward in his private member's bill.

What I believe has actually happened is that the member has identified that we have a gap in our planning process, and we need to deal with it. The fact remains that we were able to move forward. There is a need for power that has been identified. But at the same time, we've also identified that within that planning process, we didn't look at an adequate buffer zone. That's the reality check. Now we know. We step back. We manage

this in a way that's appropriate, that meets the needs of the community, the needs for additional power and, at the same time, puts that safety part first.

The World Bank, for example, has a buffer zone. They will not allow any development to occur where, in fact, it impacts on indigenous folks. They need a buffer zone. Alberta sour gas wells need a buffer zone. We have a buffer zone for wind turbines. Actually, there is an oil plant now going in close to a village in Africa, and they require a buffer zone. So it's a Planning Act process that we have identified through this bill, and we need to deal with it.

I don't think this has to be that onerous. If we've made a mistake, we need to step back, acknowledge it and ensure that we don't make the mistake again and that we find the adequate planning tools to move forward.

I served for 15 years as a school trustee. When planning a school, the first and most important thing we had was safety first for the children. So my question would be, if the gas plant were there in the beginning, would you now build a school next to it? Of course not. Now that there are schools there, would you consider building a gas plant next to it? Of course not, because safety is paramount for that community. What we need to do is ask: What are the answers, where are the solutions and how do we work with people to find a resolution to what is a fairly difficult problem?

I know that the member opposite spoke about Portlands extensively. The fact remains that Portlands had a coal- and gas-fired plant on that land for decades. This was the only city in the world that didn't have its own power source. This is not applicable to Oakville; it's an entirely different situation. We need to be able to recognize that we have a problem. It has been identified. We need to work with the community, we need to find a resolution and this is the beginning of how we can manage to do that.

I don't think we have to be difficult to deal with with each other. I think we can find a solution that supports the need for electricity but, at the same time, takes into consideration the location of that electricity, where it will be produced.

If we can't do that, it begs some other questions. Someone said to me at one point, "Well, it'll be built, but it'll never be used." I said to myself, "That begs about four other questions for me, because then why are we building a 945-megawatt peaker plant?" That certainly is also a part of that planning process.

We've put in place a very substantive way to deal with energy and the needs going forward into the future. It doesn't take a lot to step back and say, "We have a problem here; let's resolve it as we move forward." We can do this in a way that is not acrimonious to anyone.

Thank you, and I'm pleased to be able to support the member from Oakville.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Frank Klees: I'm going to support this bill because it is the right thing to do.

I do want to ask the question, though, as to why we're here. We heard the fact that it was this government that actually passed legislation that took the power and the authority away from municipalities to have their say and that if the provincial government didn't have the wisdom to ensure that the setback was there, the buffer zone was there, that's what the municipal level of government would have been there to do, to ensure that it was done. This government took that authority away from local governments.

We have the same thing happening in King township, and I'd like to know if the members of the government will come with the same kind of aid for the people in King as they are now pretending to do for the people in Oakville.

Here's what I'm going to caution the people who are observing this debate from the sidelines: This is wonderful theatre. This is one way that the member has to say to his local community, "I stand up for you."

Here's what we will be watching. First of all, will this bill go to third reading and be given royal assent? Big question. I doubt it. I don't believe for one minute that what we're observing here is a process that will result in the government taking direction from this Legislature on this issue—not for one minute. It's a face-saving exercise—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. The honourable member's time has expired.

The honourable member for Oakville, Mr. Flynn, has up to two minutes for his response.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I'd like to thank the members for all their friendly comments, advice and assistance. It will be remembered; you can be assured of that.

I'd like to remind the last speaker that there was a government that imposed a power plant on my community, right on Winston Churchill Boulevard. It's called the Sithe plant, and I believe, Mr. Klees, you probably voted for that. So you want to talk about theatre? You've got a little confessing to do there, I think, member.

TransCanada will not have its approvals in place. The member asked if it's going have its approvals in place before the end of this sitting, and I'm absolutely certain they will not have their approvals in place.

The member from Beaches-East York talked about municipal involvement in the location of a planning act. There are two gentlemen you can speak to. They may come down to your office in room 154. I haven't seen two people more involved in opposing the location of a power plant, and perhaps, had there been a better council in place in the city of Toronto, as active a council as I have in the town of Oakville, the outcome would have been a little different. Instead, you have people who are working on behalf of their own community to ensure that this plant does not become a reality. That didn't happen in the city of Toronto. You tried to block it in my own community. You tried to impose a power plant on my community of Oakville. We had petitions; we had 10,000 petitions that you ignored. Your government, Mr. Klees,

ignored 10,000 petitions and said, "That plant's going to be built."

I am determined to see this plant not built in my community. I believe that by supporting this today we put an end to this sort of thing in all our communities in the future and we stop the finger-pointing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We'll vote on Mr. Flynn's ballot item in about 50 minutes.

ESSENTIAL PUBLIC TRANSIT SERVICES ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LES SERVICES DE TRANSPORT EN COMMUN ESSENTIELS

Mr. Caplan moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 15, An Act to resolve public transit services labour disputes without strikes or lock-outs / Projet de loi 15, Loi visant à régler sans grève ni lock-out les conflits de travail au sein des services de transport en commun.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Pursuant to standing order 98, the honourable member has up to 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. David Caplan: We established, during first reading of the Essential Public Transit Services Act, 2010, that public transit indeed, whether one is a transit user or not, is very vital to the health, social and economic well-being of our city—I would argue, of our entire province. I'm concerned, as many Torontonians are, as many Ontarians are, about the reliability of our public transit services. Simply put, our cities cannot function properly without fully operational public transit systems.

Indeed, more than 1.3 million Torontonians rely on the Toronto Transit Commission, the TTC, each and every day to get to work, to get to school, to get to a medical appointment, or simply to live. Toronto in particular is not able to function without a working transit system, and Toronto is the capital city of our great province, Ontario, the fifth most populous city in North America, the economic and financial capital of Canada.

Given those unique factors above of population size, of special area and the vital economic function of our city, it becomes clear to me that a public transportation system in our city must be reliable and must be consistent. Unfortunately, through our city's history, various transportation service disputes have too often left our city in chaos, left us paralyzed.

1540

Although public transit was identified by Metro Toronto's founders as one of the essential services, there have been too many instances in which the TTC has failed to be just that.

The first of many strikes to come took place in 1952 and lasted 19 days. Another one followed in 1970 and lasted 12 days. The longest strike in the system's history took place in 1974 and lasted 23 days. There are several more that I could chronicle, but I recall that in 1989, TTC

workers staged a 41-day slowdown. Although it was not a strike, it severely damaged the services provided, caused unbearable slowness and undermined ridership confidence. The strike in 1991 lasted eight days. A couple of years later, in 1999, there was a two-day strike. On May 29, 2006, a one-day wildcat strike took place when TTC employees suddenly walked off the job, causing severe disruption.

Most recently, after the TTC union voted down a contract as of midnight, April 26, 2008, the Toronto Transit Commission was officially on strike. This move quickly shut down buses, streetcars and subways that carry over 1.5 million people across the city every weekday. This Legislature convened over the weekend for an emergency session, having no real option but to act to send people back to work to avoid more hardship and disruption of our fellow citizens.

Indeed, over the course of history, of the last 12 rounds of bargaining, nine have ended in impasse; 75% of the time, it has been sent to arbitration.

It has become quite clear that any type of work stoppage or even the threat of work stoppage makes commuters second-guess whether they can trust transit to be there when they need it. We have seen the evidence of ridership plummeting after each and every disruption.

I say that enough is enough. I believe that the residents of Toronto—indeed, the residents of other cities in Ontario—want to see legislation that would put an end to this kind of disruption, and Bill 15 will do just that.

The purpose of the Essential Public Transit Services Act, 2010, is to designate the Toronto Transit Commission, the TTC, as an essential service. If enacted, this act will prohibit strikes and lockouts in connection with labour disputes between the TTC and its employees. If both sides cannot reach a negotiated settlement, issues will be determined through an arbitration process, as it has in nine of the last 12 rounds of bargaining.

Now, some might argue, and some do, that making transit an essential service or having arbitrated settlements will cost the city more money. I simply don't buy that line of argument. In fact, even the most pessimistic predictions made by the C.D. Howe Institute foresee the potential cost at a mere—and get this—a measly half a penny per ride. The study doesn't take into account, by the way, the \$4 million per day that strikes cost the TTC when they occur and, according to the city manager here in the city of Toronto, the shocking \$50 million per day that strikes cost the city economy.

I believe that most of the 1.3 million Torontonians who rely on the TTC each and every day would be willing to pay that extra 0.5 cents every time they rode the TTC if it meant the assurance of a reliable system, something that they could know was there when they needed it.

This bill also will authorize the Lieutenant Governor in Council to make regulations extending this regime to any other public transit service in the province of Ontario. Recent examples, of course, abound: in Durham region; in London. London had a strike back in the winter, from November 16 to December 14, causing

hardship for thousands of students, thousands of seniors, working people who rely so heavily on public transit.

Overall, in order for Toronto and, indeed, many other cities and towns across Ontario to function properly, public transit needs to be declared essential: essential like the police, essential like firefighters.

It's time to recognize that public transit systems like the TTC are a vital part of our city, and to our economy, to our environment, to the workers, to the poor, to the disabled, to the seniors, to the students, most of whom simply have no other means of getting around.

There are many reasons that a reliable transit system is important to our citizens. They include the cost of driving—very expensive—the cost of gas—which is prohibitive—parking and insurance. In this age of diversity of our city's population, with its significant number of children living below legal driving age, our road and our parking infrastructure cannot handle increased use of private vehicles. Overall, the average daily ridership of the TTC exceeds 2.46 million passengers: almost 1.2 million by bus, about 325,000 by streetcar, 35,000 by intermediate rail, and over 900,000 by subway.

Traffic congestion: The Toronto region is one of the top five most congested in North America. The cost of additional congestion due to strikes is in the millions. According to a survey done by the Ontario Ministry of Transportation, road congestion in the Toronto region costs our economy approximately \$2 billion a year in lost time and productivity. Public transit affects the residents economically, socially and for health reasons. Gridlock caused by transit strikes paralyzes the city and causes many detrimental effects to our local economy, to our environment, to our health and to the well-being of our residents. The economic loss I've mentioned to you, \$50 million per day, per 24-hour period, is due to employees being absent, lost customers, lost wages and lost service to taxpayers.

Environmental effects: During a public transportation strike, the environmental damage resulting from increase in motor vehicle use and pollution along with the accompanying traffic congestion can be calculated in the millions. Our public transit system contributes to cleaner air, to cleaner water, to less non-renewable fuel use and less vehicle waste. It helps preserve our green spaces from highway construction, reduces traffic noise, helps keep our trees, plants and forests green, and sustains our water. According to Dr. Franz Hartmann, executive director of the Toronto Environmental Alliance, "An affordable, efficient TTC is key to developing a healthy, green Toronto. Without Toronto's public transit system, the air would be much dirtier and more people would be dying prematurely because of smog-related illnesses. And without an efficient, effective TTC, Toronto would have no hope in curbing global warming."

Many more factors, but I was very heartened that Toronto city councillors have worked hard and diligently to bring this matter to the floor. On a municipal level, councillors Cliff Jenkins, Ward 25, Don Valley West, Cesar Palacio, Ward 17, Davenport, and Michael Thompson, Ward 34, Scarborough Centre, have been

strong proponents of declaring the Toronto Transit Commission an essential service. In fact, these councillors were leading the charge, working the city's subway platforms after the transit strike in 2008, asking riders to sign a petition. I have a quote from Councillor Jenkins:

"The TTC is an essential service. It is long overdue that elected representatives begin to treat it as a necessity, not merely a convenience. Governments can ensure fair wages and working conditions while also ensuring that essential transit services are maintained, and that vulnerable citizens are not held hostage to transit stoppages at every contract renewal. For the 1.3 million riders who rely on it every day, the TTC is essential. I applaud Mr. Caplan's efforts to bring forward this legislation on their behalf."

In conclusion, the TTC operates the main transportation system in Toronto, Canada's key economic, most populated and fourth most heavily used transportation system in all of North America. Toronto's road infrastructure is set up for both private and public service. It's time to pass legislation designating the TTC as essential, prohibiting strikes and lockouts. Commuters are fed up with work stoppages that disrupt the city and cost the local economy \$50 million a day. Poll after poll has revealed that declaring public transit an essential service is something that the vast majority of Torontonians would like to see happening.

1550

At the end of the day, my neighbours just want buses, trains and streetcars to be there when they need them. It was aforementioned that there are tremendous economic, social and health costs, but above all, many of the benefits are priceless: better trust in the system by citizens, which leads to better health, less stress, longer life, stronger communities, a stronger city and, indeed, a stronger province. Essential public transit service in Toronto is unavoidable. I say, enough is enough. Citizens all over our city have been left stranded too many times. It's time to regain their trust, and I would ask all my colleagues to support Bill 15.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm pleased to have this opportunity this afternoon to speak in response to Bill 15, An Act to resolve public transit services labour disputes without strikes or lock-outs, which has been brought forward by the member for Don Valley East.

This bill was introduced in the previous session before the House prorogued, if I'm not mistaken, but of course there wasn't enough opportunity. It was in the wintertime that it was first introduced, I think some time in February, but the member has brought it back in the current session of the Legislature to allow for a discussion during private members' time and an opportunity, hopefully, for a vote in just under an hour's time.

I want to compliment the member for Don Valley East for bringing this forward. I think he is certainly sincere in this initiative and wants to see the issue debated, and I know that he would want to see this bill pass.

I have enjoyed working with the member for Don Valley East since he was elected to the Legislature in 1999, if I'm not mistaken.

Interjection.

Mr. Ted Arnott: After that? Oh, wow. Okay. He's been here for a while longer than that.

Certainly, when we've had House duty afternoons together, we've enjoyed our long conversations about the challenge of public life and the challenge of balancing family life with our public responsibilities. Certainly, when he was Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal and Minister of Health, I always appreciated his sympathetic ear to the concerns I was bringing forward and his willingness to at least listen. I'm not sure to what extent—I'm still trying to get that Fergus hospital, David. You may not be surprised to hear that.

At the same time, I think he has gone through a number of ups and downs during the course of his public career. It's fairly obvious that he was expected to carry responsibility for the eHealth scandal, which did not initiate under his watch as Minister of Health. Certainly another Minister of Health would have to bear responsibility for that; however, the member for Don Valley East, in the end, was expected to accept the responsibility of resigning. I know that the member has a great future ahead of him and clearly aspires to serve on the executive council again.

With respect to Bill 15, I had a chance to review some of the literature with respect to this bill, and I listened quite intently to what the member said in his presentation. I would agree with him that public transit is vital to the health and social well-being of the city of Toronto, and very important to the communities in the province of Ontario that have public transit.

He mentioned the need for reliability for people who are using the transit system to go to work, to their medical appointments, to do their shopping, to take their children across town or what have you. It is essential that that reliability be there. People need it, and the service needs to be consistent.

The member is motivated by a desire to eliminate the disputes and strikes that have taken place. He related to the House a number of instances when there have been long strikes going back to 1952. I didn't realize that we had as many strikes through the 1970s. He mentioned the slowdown in 1989 that went on for, I think, more than a month. More recently, since the McGuinty Liberals formed the government, I remember very vividly the one-day wildcat strike in 2006 and the one in 2008.

I was one of the members who was called down to a special Sunday emergency session in April 2008 so that we could pass back-to-work legislation to ensure that the next day, Monday morning, the TTC would operate and the city wouldn't be paralyzed in terms of people trying to get to work.

A number of us were here for that special Sunday session. If you think about it objectively and take a step back, if it was so essential that the Legislature would be called back on a Sunday afternoon in an emergency session to prevent a transit strike from taking place—if it

was that important that the Legislature would be called to do that and would do that in one day—unanimously, I would add—because unanimous consent was necessary and was offered by our side of the House—obviously this is a very important service.

The question is, is it essential? Whether it is or not is something the Legislature is going to decide, I think, this afternoon.

I have a couple of questions on my mind that I would want to ask the member. He's only got two minutes to reply, I realize that, but certainly there are other Liberals, I expect, who will participate in this debate. Maybe some of them will wish to speak to some of these issues.

The first question is: Why have there been so many transit strikes in Toronto, going back to 1952? Is it the culture of the union that makes unreasonable demands and is unwilling to accept certain realities on the part of its management? Or is it the responsibility of management? Is the management unfair? Is it consistently unfair? Why have there been so many? Why can't we find a way to bring those two parties together such that they can work together more so in the public interest—setting aside whatever individual goals and aspirations they might have—to look at the public interest first and foremost?

The second question I have is: What would this initiative cost? The member, I think, made an effort to answer that, and he talked about the fact that, in his estimation, it's one half a cent per ride. As I understood it, that would be added to the cost of the fare for anybody who's using the TTC. He cited a C.D. Howe Institute study. It's somewhat ironic that the C.D. Howe Institute came to that conclusion, because I remember C.D. Howe as the trade minister in the St. Laurent government who became quite notorious for his famous statement, "What's a million?"—as if to say that a million dollars didn't amount to that much. Of course, in those days, in the 1950s, most voters thought that a million dollars was a lot of money. If the government didn't have an understanding of that, that a million dollars of taxpayers' money was a lot of money, and didn't seem to understand that and respect it, perhaps they needed a reality check. Of course, shortly thereafter, in 1957, the Conservative government of John Diefenbaker, the minority government, was elected, and then they won a huge majority government in 1958—the biggest majority of any federal government up until that time. So when I look at the C.D. Howe Institute report, it would appear—according to the Toronto Star, at least—that it's a \$23-million cost over a three-year contract if TTC workers were to get similar deals. So we can talk about it as one half a cent per fare, but when you add it up, it would appear, according to this article in the Star, to be \$23 million.

Another question I would want to pose is: Who's going to pay this cost? Of course, we know it's going to be—it would appear that the riders will pay under this scenario, although the provincial government is called upon from time to time to contribute to the TTC. When there are TTC funding issues, of course, it is routine,

really, that the TTC comes to Queen's Park to ask for financial assistance.

Another question is: Can we afford this? I would, again, say that \$23 million is a lot of money on top of everything else. The city of Toronto has all kinds of financial problems that we hear about every day, or almost every day. The problems at city hall and the inability of the city of Toronto to control its costs and control its finances is well known. I think that we have to put this, even if it is a \$23-million increase, in perspective, obviously, with the overall financial management issues of the TTC.

The last question I would ask is: If this bill is passed, would it mean that there would be no more transit strikes? I know that the member would hope that that would be the case—although I have information here that there have been a number of wildcat strikes, certainly, in Toronto. They weren't really authorized by the union. Even in New York city, there have been transit strikes, even though, as I understand it, they have a system of binding arbitration and a ban on strikes. So I think it's probably true that this won't end strikes for all time. If the culture of the union and the culture of the management is to be unwilling to work together in the public interest and find ways to come together and find a solution to their differences, certainly that would be another issue that I think needs to be considered.

When we look back at some of the articles that have appeared on this subject, such as in the *National Post*, April 28, I think it's interesting to point out—this appears to be an editorial from the *National Post*. This is around the time of the TTC strike, and it reads as follows:

"Following the Friday evening vote, TTC workers went on strike, breaking their own union's promise to give commuters 48 hours' notice. The resulting mayhem saw thousands of Toronto residents left with no option but to walk for hours to get home as taxi companies were overwhelmed by demand. Residents are understandably angry—especially since TTC operators currently take home a very handsome wage of \$26.58 an hour, plus benefits. They also enjoy the opportunity to increase their take-home through overtime—which is abundantly available because the current contract makes it difficult to hire part time staff.

1600

"On Sunday, Ontario's Premier, Dalton McGuinty, with the support of all the opposition parties, reconvened the provincial Legislature and passed back-to-work legislation that had the TTC up and rolling as of Sunday night. In giving in to populist pressure, Mr. McGuinty and his fellow provincial politicians took away Toronto's freedom to negotiate a deal with its transit workers, forcing the city into binding arbitration. In doing so, the Premier earned populist hurrahs. But the folks clapping their hands may not realize what this means: Not surprisingly, the transit union has presented Toronto with a new list of expensive demands that were not part of the original deal signed a week ago."

I say that because I think it's important to remember this most recent strike and really what happened.

The article concludes, "For the long-term financial well-being of Toronto, its transit users and indeed for taxpayers across the country who help fund the city's transit system by one means or another, Toronto must be made to do better. The first step in that process is to resist calls to make the TTC an essential service, a step that would permanently eliminate the ability of the transit workers to strike. While this sounds superficially desirable, especially given Friday's pandemonium, it would be a mistake in the long run. Such a label would entail an automatic pay premium, something already enjoyed by the city's police and fire fighters, who signed a deal negotiated in secret last year that saw fire fighters win a 9.66% wage increase over three years."

I say this because I think it's important to put the opposite perspective on the record for members to consider.

I certainly look forward to hearing this debate as it unfolds. I'm open to the arguments that the member is bringing forward in terms of his idea as to what should happen. At the same time, I want to hear the rest of the debate. My time is winding down, but I certainly want to thank you for listening to my comments this afternoon. I look forward to the debate as it unfolds, and again, I thank the member for Don Valley East for bringing this issue forward this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I was really quite surprised today. As I listened to the member from Wellington-Halton Hills, I just found his questions ever so thoughtful, ever so mildly Conservative—not even mildly Conservative, but as an observer who looks at this issue ever objectively and says, "Hmm. I've got a number of questions here that need to be answered." I like your questions; I really do.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm a TTC rider. I really am.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: But the questions were very good. I'm going to touch on some of them as well, because I liked them.

I want to tell my friend from Don Valley East—he is a friend of mine, but I'm going to tell him that I won't support this bill. I suspect that most New Democrats would never support this kind of bill or this kind of initiative. I'm going to tell you why. There are three or four things I want to talk about.

What brought about this? Because it's interesting to have seen, immediately after the member from Don Valley East presented it, the reaction from the minister and the immediate reaction thereafter by the Premier. I found it fascinating, because after Mr. Caplan, the member from Don Valley East, tabled the bill and Transportation Minister Kathleen Wynne declared it a non-starter, the Premier said in the Legislature that it's an important issue for the mayoralty race. This is what the Premier said: "I want to applaud David Caplan's private member's bill as it reflects an appropriate source of concern about the cost of a TTC strike to the city and commuters—there can be no doubt that work stoppages cause a huge disruption. I look forward to the debate

continuing in the Legislature—including a full committee hearing with public consultations. Based on the outcome of that debate, we can have a fulsome”—and I remind the Speaker about the word “fulsome” that Peter Kormos had of course made reference to when he took out a dictionary and said how inappropriate the use of the word “fulsome” is, but that’s another issue—“discussion about the options the city might have in the future.”

It’s interesting here: The Premier thinks it’s a good debate; the Minister of Transportation believes that it’s a non-starter, that debate should end on that particular issue of this particular bill that is before us.

So we’ve got some interesting parliamentary tendencies here. David Caplan from Don Valley East says, “Yes, end the strike.” The Minister of Transportation in charge says, “Whoa, whoa, that’s a non-starter for me.” The same day, if I recall, the Premier said, “Yes, that’s a good idea.” Hmm.

It’s beautiful that a minister could stand up and say, on the same day, “No, go home, David,” and the Premier says to the minister, “You go home, Minister, because I’ve got something else to say,” and everybody feels great to be able to have their point of view. Beautiful. I love that. That is the new political Liberal Party before us. I kind of like it.

Here’s what I think. I think a whole lot of Liberals like the idea. I do. And it’ll be interesting to see who votes for it today.

Some will say, “Oh, it’s a private member’s bill. Really, come on, it’s got nothing to do with Liberal. It’s just a personal opinion. It’s a private member’s bill, for God’s sake.” Uh-uh. The Premier said a couple of years ago, in 2008, “It’s not fair for 1.5 million commuters to (be told) they can’t use the system on Monday morning.”

I quote him further: “If there was some kind of an approach made within the course of the next three years by the city of Toronto ... saying we have decided ourselves that it would be a good thing for us to have our public transit system essential, that is something that we, at Queen’s Park, would have to consider.”

The Premier was desperately reaching out to David Miller and the city council, to say, “Let’s make it an essential service,” so that the Premier could say, “Hmm, city council is asking for it. We will comply.”

David Miller and city councils do not ask for an end to TTC strikes. Therefore, we have before us David Caplan, the member from Don Valley East, who emerges from the backbenches and volunteers himself to present a bill on behalf of the Premier, good soldier that he is. That’s why the bill is before us.

The Premier wants to test this thing out. He wants to be able to say, “No, no, no, it’s a private member’s bill.”

It will pass. It will go to committee. It will be debated. We will see public reaction. We will see how many people come to depute. Based on the editorials from all the newspapers and the level of support that we get of that bill, we, the government—meaning you, fine Liberals—will, in the end, support it for third reading debate and eventually proclaim it, and there you have it. We’ll congratulate David for having brought it forth and

doing a good thing. It will be seen to be an initiative of a member who just had a good idea.

I wanted to give a little bit of that background. My suspicion is, the minister won’t support it today, to be consistent with her original position on this. But I’m looking forward to seeing what the others will do.

That is the first part of the comments: Why is it before us?

The second part is to comment on what my colleague from Don Valley East said. He doesn’t buy the study done by the C.D. Howe Institute, which is, by the way, not an organization that generally supports the NDP. I think they’re closer to the Conservative Party in general. I suspect they could lend their support quite often to the Liberal Party, as well. “According to a study last year by the public policy think tank, declaring a public service ‘essential,’ automatically sending intractable labour disputes to arbitration rather than allowing full strikes or lockouts, increases the cost of wage settlements by an average 13%,” says Benjamin Dachis, the author of the report. “More than that, it does not eliminate work disruptions or partial strikes. Indeed, the study shows that the likelihood of work disruptions such as work-to-rule campaigns or other slowdowns increases by 5% under an essential services designation. And such disruptions last much longer.”

1610

Now, understand, this is a C.D. Howe Institute study. This is not a labour group, not friends of ours, who obviously say to you, member from Don Valley East, that it’s going to cost. I know you don’t believe them, but why would a Conservative think tank take a position of this sort if they didn’t think this was true? You say that you don’t believe it, but you don’t base it on facts. You simply don’t believe it. So we put to you that there will be greater costs.

As the member from Wellington–Halton Hills said, who’s going to bear that cost? Interestingly, he said, as I heard you say, the TTC rider, as if he’s not paying enough. Interestingly, you were saying that if the rider isn’t paying it, the city of Toronto will have to pick up that cost. If it’s \$25 million under the stressful economic conditions they’ve been facing for years—with the level of cutbacks from the provincial governments before yours, and including yours—they will have to find 25 million bucks more that they do not have. You’re saying, “That’s okay, because there’s a greater good to be had. We need to reach out to those who are frustrated when a strike happens. They’re so angry; they want to be able to get on that TTC. And strikes be damned and negotiations be damned and the right to be able to negotiate be damned.”

The member from Don Valley East knows he’s tapping into a lot of visceral reaction that exists out there. I know that. The Premier knows it and so do many others. So the Premier is philosophically proclaiming himself to be on the right side of this particular bill before us.

I want to quote something else as well. In addition to the costs to send this to arbitration, John Manwaring, a

labour law expert at the University of Ottawa, says that "the problem with strike bans is that they tend to bottle up tensions.

"By banning strikes entirely, you shut off the safety valve, which is the strike, and you hold in the pressure," he said. "If the relations between employer and employees deteriorate, you often end up with an illegal strike, which is harder to resolve. The best solution is to develop good labour relations with the employees."

This bill doesn't do that. I want to say to the member from Don Valley East that since 1974, the TTC has had nine strikes and work-to-rule-campaigns, including an illegal one-day walkout in 2006, a two-day strike in 1999 and an eight-day job action in 1991. Clearly, for the member from Don Valley East, that's just too much to bear. We shouldn't have to deal with it, and people who feel as strongly as he does shouldn't have to put up with this.

The New Democrats disagree with you, member from Don Valley East. We don't believe that this does anything to help our relationships with workers. Free collective bargaining is a right that workers should have.

I end by saying that this bill does not improve public transit and does not improve customer relations at the TTC. What it does is deliberately pick a fight with TTC workers and blames them for this government's shortfall.

I will be opposing your bill, David, with all due respect, and all New Democrats will be opposing it when it comes down to this vote.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Mario Sergio: I have about four minutes. First of all, I'd like to compliment and congratulate the member from Don Valley East for bringing the issue for debate in the House.

I heard the member from Wellington-Halton Hills, who had a number of questions, but he says that he's going support it, which is very nice. Of course, there are always questions when a bill is freshly introduced.

My colleague the member from Trinity-Spadina, I believe, is always in defence of the workers, and who can fault him for that? But this bill is not with respect to the workers. I think every member of the House has the greatest of support for the workers, not only in that particular department that is the TTC, the transportation area, but I think for every city employee. Because we have a few bad apples, if you will, here and there, we can't put everybody in the same bag.

I think the thing to do here, my friendly member from Trinity-Spadina, is to send this to the people of Ontario. How are we going to do that? Let's approve this bill from this particular stage here. Let's move it on. Let's hear from the people of Ontario.

If the people running for mayor want to pick it up, if they want to debate it, if they want to show their own interest in the matter, which is a very serious, important issue, so be it. At least we will have one particular area where we know where they stand or they should be standing. As a matter of fact, member from Don Valley East, I think it should be part of the debate during this

coming municipal election. It's not a question of eliminating strikes or disputes; it is making Toronto the city that it should be and giving the people of Toronto the service that they need, that they require, that they deserve.

If there is one thing that I remember from the various disruptions, it is when people would meet me on the street, in the plaza, in the malls, at the coffee shop or at church and say, "Do something. Do something," because everyone was being affected by the lockout or the strike.

I don't think that the workers want to strike, that they want to go on lockout. What are we really taking away from the workers? They are reasonably well compensated. They are paid. They have a good pension plan. They are well respected. They will go to arbitration and, most of the time, they get more than what they would be getting in renegotiating a particular agreement.

Really, what are we talking about here? I think we should be finding out more of what the people of Toronto have to say about that, and we will be hearing from the business community, from the various interested parties, from the individual citizens who are being affected.

I would say to the House today that the member from Don Valley East has brought to this House an important bill. Let's approve it. Let's forward it. Let's hear from the people of Toronto. Let's answer some of those questions, and we will be taking it from here.

I thank you, Speaker, for the time that I have been allowed to speak on this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The member for Oakville.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to rise again, this time in support of what I think is a great bill being brought forward by my colleague from Don Valley East.

I think it's timely that this bill be brought forward at this time as well because, often, most of the talk surrounding this issue is when a strike is pending or when a labour lockout is starting to be something that may be taking place. That's when people start talking about it. We're not facing that right now, so I think it's a very calm time to have a frank discussion, a discussion that I think is really necessary.

If you look at the track record of the success of the collective bargaining around the province of Ontario, it's a very enviable record. It's one we should all be proud of in this province. However, when you look at the Toronto Transit Commission, they've had nine strikes since 1974, work-to-rule campaigns as well, and they had an illegal walkout, of course, in 2006. The London transit strike left people in London paralyzed, in a strike that lasted for almost a month. That was back in 2008. And, of course, 2008-09 saw another transit strike in Ottawa that lasted 51 days.

This is important to my constituents as well. People might wonder, "Why would a person from Oakville be interested in what is essentially a Toronto-centred issue when you're looking at the Toronto Transit Commission?" Many of my constituents travel to Toronto on a daily basis. This is where they earn their living. This is where they do their work.

The Essential Public Transit Services Act, which has been put forward by my colleague, is very thoughtful. It prohibits strikes and lockouts. It allows the transit system to continue to run.

1620

The way we organize ourselves as a society today, especially a complex urban society like Toronto, you need that transit system on a daily basis. When you don't have it, everything shuts down. I think it's in the best interests of everybody that these types of disputes be resolved by arbitration while allowing for the service to continue.

At the end of the day, you have to understand that we, at all levels of government, are responsible to our constituents. It's our job to make sure that service continues. It's also our job to honour, in whichever way we can, a collective bargaining process. The Essential Public Transit Services Act that is being proposed by my colleague allows for that bargaining process to continue by arbitration.

Residents of Toronto and other cities have learned pretty clearly that, whether you use it or not, public transit severely impacts the economy of the city when it is shut down. It severely impacts the taxpayers of the city as well.

So from an economic point of view, from an environmental point of view and from the point of view of health and medical costs, there are certainly great reasons to support this proposed bill that is before us today.

We know it results in economic losses if we have a strike or lockout. We know there's an increase in pollution from motor vehicle use, congestion and gridlock on the streets. There's a rise in health problems, and just the stress alone for people wondering how they're going to get to work in the morning, whether they're going to be allowed to keep their job if they aren't at work the next morning—it's the sort of stress our families don't need.

I think the member has brought forward a sensible solution to all this. It honours all parties and allows the process to continue. More importantly, I think, it serves the needs of constituents, whom we should all be aspiring to serve on a daily basis.

I think it is well thought out, I think it's sensible and I think it deserves the support of all members of this Legislature.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

M. Shafiq Qaadri: Je veux remercier mon collègue le représentant de Don Valley East pour avoir attiré l'attention d'Ontario et particulièrement de cette Chambre sur ces questions et ces points si importants.

It's a privilege and an honour to rise to support my colleague David Caplan, MPP for Don Valley East, as he brings forward what is no doubt a much-needed, much-overdue and very measured approach, the Essential Public Transit Services Act, 2010.

Many of my colleagues on both sides of the House have, of course, very appropriately cited the economic, the medical, the gridlock—all the different areas that a strike in a major metropolitan region can cause. Of

course, it is to avoid this, to keep the city working, to keep Toronto the Good good, to keep everything running efficiently, that he is bringing forward this particular bill.

In addition to all the various comments that have been laid forth, in terms of delays and economic loss, I bring to the attention of those who are listening to me and those in Ontario, and you, Speaker, the Ottawa transit strike that happened about a year and a half ago, in January 2009. I would just cite for a moment, for the good citizens of Toronto—if they could just do a little Ottawa projection onto the city of Toronto, let's map, for a moment, what took place in Ottawa and revisit, had that actually happened here.

I remind this chamber that that strike took 51 days. As you can imagine, it paralyzed the nation's capital. Now, arguably, Ottawa being the centre of federal politics, maybe it was not particularly noticeable, but I think a similar kind of paralysis, a strike of similar duration in the city of Toronto—51 days—would literally have been catastrophic.

Of course, we as a government had the opportunity, responsibility, duty and privilege to deal with exactly that type of brewing situation, as has been mentioned here, I believe, in April of 2008, when all of us who are currently elected in this Legislature were here. We had to come into session during an emergency meeting on a Sunday, as was mentioned, to actually legislate the TTC workers back, because we knew the extraordinary cost, the human cost, the 1,000 points of light that were affected.

Again, people have mentioned gridlock and traffic. If I might be permitted just for a moment as a physician to talk about the human suffering, the human element—for example, individuals who had medical appointments, be it with family physicians, be it at hospitals, who needed to go for various tests. More importantly, I heard from constituents who were due to go and be told the results of tests: “Do you or do you not have cancer? What is the lump in the mammogram actually showing? Does this or that medication work? Would they be able to pick up medications from pharmacies?” and so on. All of these are, of course, elements, items in that very long list of the human cost.

So I would commend my colleague the honourable David Caplan for bringing forward this particular bill, because he deals not only with the economic efficiency, with the workings of a major metropolitan city, but also with future planning and, of course, using the Legislature and all its various tools to ultimately empower the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member, Mr. Caplan, has up to two minutes for his response.

Mr. David Caplan: I'd like to thank all five members who chose to speak to Bill 15.

The member from Etobicoke North points out the situation in Ottawa.

The member from Oakville actually made a very interesting comment: that this was timely. One of reasons why this particular bill is quite timely is that the next

round of bargaining, that a contract ends, is the spring of 2011. So it's important to establish the ground rules well before we get there.

The member from York West talks about the business community. In fact, I would say to the member from York West that the Canadian Federation of Independent Business surveyed its members, and in excess of 80% of their members said that this was the measure that they felt should be taken to provide them with stability, certainty, and to forgo the economic loss that those members face when they do have this kind of disruption.

The member from Trinity-Spadina says, "What brought this about?" That's a good question. I was contacted significantly by my neighbours in Don Valley East back in the last round of contract negotiations when things went awry. Seniors told me that they missed medical appointments. Parents told me they had tremendous difficulty getting their children to school. It's for my neighbours and for the residents of the city of Toronto that this needs to be done.

The member from Wellington-Halton Hills asked a series of very good and excellent questions. I do want to provide him some answers. Why have we had so many strikes? I believe that is because both management and the union know that the Legislature will step in and order this to arbitration, as they have done 75% of the time they have had disruption in the last 30 years. What's the cost? According to C.D. Howe, \$11 million to \$23 million, or half a cent per ticket per ride. Who pays? I think the rider should. And can we afford it? I say to the member from Wellington-Halton Hills: We can't afford not to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time provided for private members' public business has now expired.

ENHANCING THE ABILITY
OF INCOME SUPPORT RECIPIENTS
TO BE FINANCIALLY
INDEPENDENT ACT, 2010
LOI DE 2010 REHAUSSANT
L'AUTONOMIE FINANCIÈRE
DES BÉNÉFICIAIRES
DU SOUTIEN DU REVENU

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will first deal with ballot item number 10, standing in the name of Mr. Barrett.

Mr. Barrett has moved second reading of Bill 23, An Act to amend the Ontario Disability Support Program Act, 1997 and the Taxation Act, 2007. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Barrett?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I wonder if we could see our way clear to refer this bill for further deliberation to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Is it agreed that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs? Agreed? So ordered.

SEPARATION DISTANCES
FOR NATURAL GAS
POWER PLANTS ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR L'ÉTABLISSEMENT
DE DISTANCES DE SÉPARATION
POUR LES CENTRALES ÉLECTRIQUES
AU GAZ NATUREL

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We'll now deal with ballot item number 11, standing in the name of Mr. Flynn.

Mr. Flynn has moved second reading of Bill 8, An Act to establish separation distances for natural gas power plants. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay."
In my opinion, the ayes have it.

We will call in the members after the next vote.

ESSENTIAL PUBLIC TRANSIT
SERVICES ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LES SERVICES
DE TRANSPORT EN COMMUN
ESSENTIELS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will now deal with ballot item 12, standing in the name of Mr. Caplan.

Mr. Caplan has moved second reading of Bill 15, An Act to resolve public transit services labour disputes without strikes or lock-outs.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

We will call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1630 to 1635.

SEPARATION DISTANCES
FOR NATURAL GAS
POWER PLANTS ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR L'ÉTABLISSEMENT
DE DISTANCES DE SÉPARATION
POUR LES CENTRALES ÉLECTRIQUES
AU GAZ NATUREL

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Flynn has moved second reading of Bill 8. All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing until counted by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura
 Arnott, Ted
 Bailey, Robert
 Barrett, Toby
 Bisson, Gilles
 Brownell, Jim
 Cansfield, Donna H.
 Caplan, David
 Chudleigh, Ted
 Colle, Mike

Delaney, Bob
 Dhillon, Vic
 Elliott, Christine
 Flynn, Kevin Daniel
 Jaczek, Helena
 Jones, Sylvia
 Klees, Frank
 Kormos, Peter
 Kular, Kuldeep
 Marchese, Rosario

Miller, Norm
 Munro, Julia
 Murray, Glen R.
 Prue, Michael
 Qaadri, Shafiq
 Rinaldi, Lou
 Ruprecht, Tony
 Sergio, Mario

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): All those opposed to the motion will please rise until recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arthurs, Wayne

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 28; the nays are 1.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I would like this bill referred to general government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Is it agreed that the bill be referred to the general government committee? So ordered.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I seek unanimous consent for the order referring Bill 8 to committee be discharged, and the bill ordered for third reading.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Is it agreed that the bill be ordered for third reading? I heard a no. Having heard a no, all those in favour of the motion will please—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Sorry, it was unanimous consent. I heard a no. We don't have unanimous consent.

We'll open the doors for 30 seconds and then do Mr. Caplan's bill.

ESSENTIAL PUBLIC TRANSIT
 SERVICES ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LES SERVICES
 DE TRANSPORT EN COMMUN
 ESSENTIELS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Caplan has moved second reading of Bill 15. All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted
 Bailey, Robert
 Barrett, Toby
 Caplan, David
 Chudleigh, Ted
 Delaney, Bob

Dhillon, Vic
 Elliott, Christine
 Flynn, Kevin Daniel
 Jones, Sylvia
 Klees, Frank
 Kular, Kuldeep

Miller, Norm
 Munro, Julia
 Qaadri, Shafiq
 Ruprecht, Tony
 Sergio, Mario

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): All those opposed to the motion will please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Albanese, Laura
 Arthurs, Wayne
 Bisson, Gilles
 Brownell, Jim
 Cansfield, Donna H.

Colle, Mike
 Jaczek, Helena
 Kormos, Peter
 Levac, Dave
 Marchese, Rosario

Murray, Glen R.
 Prue, Michael
 Rinaldi, Lou
 Wynne, Kathleen O.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 17; the nays are 14.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Caplan.

Mr. David Caplan: I ask that it be referred to the general government committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Is it agreed that the bill be referred to the general government committee? Agreed. So ordered.

All matters relating to private members' public business having been completed, I do now call orders of the day.

1640

ORDERS OF THE DAY

RETIREMENT HOMES ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LES MAISONS DE RETRAITE

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 15, 2010, on the motion for second reading of Bill 21, An Act to regulate retirement homes / Projet de loi 21, Loi réglementant les maisons de retraite.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Debate?

Mr. Ted Arnott: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: This morning during question period, I heard the Acting Premier of the province of Ontario give an impassioned defence of the government's proposed changes to the Ministry of Education sex education curriculum. I've heard a rumour that the Premier of Ontario has done a complete 180—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I'd ask the honourable member to take his seat. Please take your seat. I think you know that—that doesn't appear to be a point of order. Debate?

Mr. Ted Arnott: Mr. Speaker, I was going to seek the unanimous consent of the House to allow a government minister, perhaps, to inform the House as to what exactly has happened. Perhaps the Minister of Transportation—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Do we have unanimous consent? I hear some noes. Further debate, please. Any debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: I know that the debate is winding down, but I want to be on the record in terms of this very

important bill. Much of what is contained within the body of the bill is good. Much of what is contained within the body of the bill is going to help those people who live in retirement homes, and by extension, the family of those people who live in retirement homes. We all know, and I think that we all believe, that those people in those retirement homes are some of our most cherished citizens. They are very vulnerable. They are, in most cases, very old. Some of them have physical and mental incapacities, but they are also people who have done great service to the people of our province and of our country. Some of them have fought for us in times of war. Others have worked in munitions factories. They have all raised families. They have all built the infrastructure of this wonderful province. I believe that we owe them the very best, not only the very best in terms of the type of entertainment, food and care that we are able to give them, but the very best in safety.

There is one glaring omission in this bill, and that glaring omission, in my view, is the provision for putting in fire sprinklers in all of the retirement homes. We know that a number of fires over the last 10 years have claimed a dozen or so or 15 lives. We know that this has happened. Every time there is a major fire in one of these retirement homes, there appears to be death. One needs to ask why this is happening. Quite simply, in my view—and I have been to so many retirement homes over the course of my political life of more than 21 years—it is that the homes tend to be old. A lot of them were built 20, 30, 50, even 100 years ago. They are not up to today's fire code. They are nice places to live, but they are not safe places to live. So we have to look at that, first of all: Are these safe places to live? Do they meet the fire code?

I know that I asked myself the same question on other bills. My own private member's bill, which has been before the House four times and is still awaiting third reading, is a bill which would outlaw wooden fire escapes. The only reason we have wooden fire escapes, or the only reason we have fire escapes, is that the building otherwise does not meet code and we have to give egress from a different location. Oftentimes, older apartment buildings build a fire escape in order to bring themselves back within the ambit of the fire code.

I use this by reason of extension to say that we need to look at the methods of escape in nursing homes. We have a very different circumstance. Most nursing homes are built on one or two or three floors. I don't think I have ever visited one which is multi-storey, but I'm sure there must be some of those as well.

We have the difficulty of people who suffer from all kinds of ailments: physical ailments, mental ailments, dementia, extreme old age. These people—our mothers, our fathers, our uncles, our aunts—deserve the very best. We try to give them that best. We have people who help them to dress. We have people who help to feed them if they require that. We have people who provide entertainment, who take them from room to room in order that they may socialize. These are the same people who are

instructed, in times of distress, if there is a fire or other emergency, to get them wherever they are and to get them out of the building to the safety of firefighters or to the safety of just the outside air.

We know that the ratio between those who live in the retirement homes and those who work in the retirement homes is often not as high as it needs to be, and we know that the people who try to provide the service will do the very best within their capacity to go into a building that is being evacuated and to try to make sure that everyone gets out. Unfortunately, it has all too often been the experience that they cannot get in in sufficient time to get the people out before fires, smoke inhalation, collapsed walls, all of the things that happen, occur.

We know we can slow that process down. Many times the fire departments have been here in front of the Legislature, and they have shown us the flashpoint. They have shown us that in the first four to five minutes of a fire, it can be contained and it generally does not cause any loss of life unless you are in very close proximity to it. What happens, though, after four or five minutes, is that a flashpoint develops. The fire starts to burn hotter and faster, the wind vectors in, and with all of those, the fire gets out of control.

That's usually around the time the fire departments arrive, because they are located in places around cities and towns and they try to maintain a four- or five-minute distance once they get a fire alarm. All too often, it may be too late. If there are seven or eight minutes, it may be too late.

The reason for sprinklers in retirement homes or anywhere else is that they are extremely successful in sensing smoke and fire and heat. It melts the wax or the compound that holds the water back. The sprinklers start and deaden the advance of the fire. Oftentimes, although it does not put it out, it maintains it in such a benign state—if I can use that word—that the fire does not get out of control.

I know that my colleague, now the Minister of Natural Resources, has introduced many times over the course of the years, before being elevated to the ministry, a bill that would mandate sprinklers in private homes. But I think it is even more serious and more important that we put the sprinklers in retirement homes. It is even more important that they be in places where people do not have the same access or physical ability to get out of a burning building. I know that the majority of people, those who are younger than me, would have the wherewithal to climb out a window, to get to a second place of egress, to get around the fire if they heard in it time, and get out of the building. But someone with dementia, someone who is mobility impaired, someone who does not have the wherewithal of moving quickly or getting downstairs or whatever, requires that the staff is there, and unfortunately, the staff is not. In the absence of putting additional staff and having that staff there 24 hours a day in the eventuality of a fire, I think the better cost option and the one that will provide the greatest level of safety for the least amount of cost is to put in a sprinkler system.

I know that this is somewhat contentious. I know that the fire officers in Ontario have said it is but one program that they would like to institute. The fire chiefs, on the other hand, say that they should be mandatory, and there is a bit of a debate between those who are the bosses and those who follow those orders as to what can be done. But it would seem logical to me that we put the sprinklers into each and every one of the homes, because in the end I would much rather, as a person in this Legislature, wake up in the morning and open up the newspaper and, sadly, see that there was a fire in a place like Brantford and see that everybody got out because there were sprinklers there than to read the paper and see that people died because there were no sprinklers. I think we have that obligation here to look after the weakest members of our community, the frail and elderly, those who cannot accommodate for themselves. This is a reasonable and rational thing to do.

I have heard the minister, the Solicitor General, talk about how he's weighing the options. I wasn't really sure whether he felt that it should be in there or not, but I am asking the members here to think very carefully about this when it is ordered—this is second reading, I trust.

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Prue: It is second reading. If it is ordered to go to committee, it is one of those motions that I would like to make or have someone in my party make, to include this provision of sprinklers in retirement homes over the next number of years. I do recognize that for some retirement homes the cost may be a little onerous. I recognize that. But if we can phase them in, if we can give the retirement homes three or four or five years to do the necessary repairs on a cycle when repairs are being undertaken in the home, I do not think it has to be onerous. I certainly know that if it was my mother living in a home without sprinklers, I would want there to be some there. I think most of us in this Legislature would share the same concern if it was one of our parents

who was there: that we knew, in our absence and in the absence, perhaps, in the middle of the night, of sufficient staff, there would be some mechanism to hold them safe.

That's the element of the debate I wish to speak to. It's the only thing that I think is missing particularly from this bill. I am asking the government, when this goes to committee, to seriously consider adding this provision. If you do so, in my view, you will make a good bill better. If you do so, you will protect the lives of those we want to protect. And in the end, all of those people who say not to do it—the only rationale I have heard to date is that it is expensive. Please consider that expense—put it in over a number of years, give some kind of incentive, if that's what needs to happen to private retirement homes, by way of money or tax rebate or whatever is required—but please do it. In the end, we will be protecting the lives of those heroes, those people who have built this province and to whom we owe so much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments? Further debate?

Seeing none, Mr. Phillips has moved second reading of Bill 21. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading? The Minister of Labour.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I would ask that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): So ordered. Orders of the day?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House stands adjourned until next Monday at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1654.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Aggelonitis, Hon. / L'hon. Sophia (LIB)	Hamilton Mountain	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Arthurs, Wayne (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	Attorney General / Procureur général Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Broten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Caplan, David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Carroll, M. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism and Culture / Ministre du Tourisme et de la Culture
Chiarelli, Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Crozier, Bruce (LIB)	Essex	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (LIB)	Prince Edward–Hastings	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Energy and Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Énergie et de l'Infrastructure
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Dunlop, Garfield (PC) Elliott, Christine (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord Whitby—Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB) Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB)	Oakville Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Gélinas, France (NDP) Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Nickel Belt Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry / Ministre du Développement du Nord, des Mines et des Forêts
Hampton, Howard (NDP) Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Kenora—Rainy River Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Hoy, Pat (LIB) Hudak, Tim (PC)	Chatham—Kent—Essex Niagara West—Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest—Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jaczek, Helena (LIB) Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Oak Ridges—Markham Brampton—Springdale	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Johnson, Rick (LIB) Jones, Sylvia (PC) Klees, Frank (PC) Kormos, Peter (NDP) Kular, Kuldip (LIB) Kwinter, Monte (LIB) Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB) Leal, Jeff (LIB) Levac, Dave (LIB) MacLeod, Lisa (PC) Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock Dufferin—Caledon Newmarket—Aurora Welland Bramalea—Gore—Malton York Centre / York-Centre Glengarry—Prescott—Russell Peterborough Brant Nepean—Carleton Mississauga—Brampton South / Mississauga—Brampton-Sud	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Marchese, Rosario (NDP) Martiniuk, Gerry (PC) Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	Trinity—Spadina Cambridge London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB) McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McMeekin, Ted (LIB)	Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough— Westdale	
McNeely, Phil (LIB) Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa—Orléans Ottawa—Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC) Miller, Paul (NDP) Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Parry Sound—Muskoka Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Hon. / L'hon. Carol (LIB)	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Murray, Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Oraziotti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (LIB)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Economic Development and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London–Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Nipissing	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Perth–Wellington	Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Garfield Dunlop
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Robert Bailey
Robert Bailey, Gilles Bisson
Jim Brownell, Kim Craiton
Bob Delaney, Garfield Dunlop
Amrit Mangat, Phil McNeely
John O'Toole
Clerks / Greffiers: William Short (pro tem.), Sylwia Przewdziecki

Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs / Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques

Chair / Président: Pat Hoy
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laura Albanese
Laura Albanese, Wayne Arthurs
Toby Barrett, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Pat Hoy, Norm Miller
Glen R Murray, Charles Sousa
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

Standing Committee on General Government / Comité permanent des affaires gouvernementales

Chair / Président: David Orazietti
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Helena Jaczek
Bob Chiarelli, Steve Clark
Helena Jaczek, Kuldeep Kular
Dave Levac, Rosario Marchese
Bill Mauro, David Orazietti
Joyce Savoline
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité permanent des organismes gouvernementaux

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Laura Albanese, Michael A. Brown
Donna H. Cansfield, M. Aileen Carroll
Howard Hampton, Ernie Hardeman
Lisa MacLeod, Leeanna Pendergast
Jim Wilson
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de la justice

Chair / Président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Leeanna Pendergast
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Ted Chudleigh
Mike Colle, Christine Elliott
Peter Kormos, Reza Moridi
Leeanna Pendergast, Lou Rinaldi
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité permanent de l'Assemblée législative

Chair / Président: Bas Balkissoon
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Yasir Naqvi
Bas Balkissoon, Bob Delaney
Joe Dickson, Sylvia Jones
Amrit Mangat, Norm Miller
Yasir Naqvi, Michael Prue
Mario Sergio
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Granum

Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent des comptes publics

Chair / Président: Norman W. Sterling
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Peter Shurman
M. Aileen Carroll, France Gélinas
Jerry J. Ouellette, David Ramsay
Liz Sandals, Peter Shurman
Norman W. Sterling, Maria Van Bommel
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé

Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Paul Miller
David Caplan, Kim Craiton
Jeff Leal, Gerry Martiniuk
Paul Miller, Bill Murdoch
Michael Prue, Lou Rinaldi
Tony Ruprecht
Clerks / Greffiers: Trevor Day (pro tem.), Sylwia Przewdziecki

Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de la politique sociale

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vic Dhillon
Vic Dhillon, Cheri DiNovo
Rick Johnson, Sylvia Jones
Jean-Marc Lalonde, Ted McMeekin
Shafiq Qaadri, Khalil Ramal
Elizabeth Witmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions / Comité spécial de la santé mentale et des dépendances

Chair / Président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott
Bas Balkissoon, Christine Elliott
Kevin Daniel Flynn, France Gélinas
Helena Jaczek, Sylvia Jones
Jeff Leal, Liz Sandals
Maria Van Bommel
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Hon. Margaret R. Best	890
Mr. Bob Delaney	890

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

Victims of crime	
Mr. Ted Chudleigh	890
Pharmacists	
Mr. Peter Kormos	890
Renewable energy	
Mr. Lou Rinaldi	891
Organ and tissue donation	
Mr. Frank Klees	891
Culture Days	
Mr. Bob Delaney	891
Learning Enrichment Foundation	
Mrs. Laura Albanese	892
Pharmacists	
Mr. Ted Arnott	892
Prescription drugs	
Mr. Rick Johnson	892
Republic of Turkey	
Mr. Tony Ruprecht	892

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES / RAPPORTS DES COMITÉS

Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly	
Mr. Bob Delaney	893
Report adopted	893
Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills	
Mr. Michael Prue	893
Debate adjourned	893

MOTIONS

Private members' public business	
Hon. Linda Jeffrey	893
Motion agreed to	893

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES / DÉCLARATIONS MINISTÉRIELLES ET RÉPONSES

Earth Day	
Hon. Linda Jeffrey	893

Ontario Coaches Week	
Hon. Margaret R. Best	894
Earth Day	
Mr. Norm Miller	895
Ontario Coaches Week	
Mr. Norm Miller	895
Mr. Paul Miller	896
Earth Day	
Mr. Michael Prue	896

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Power plant	
Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn	896
Ontario pharmacists	
Mr. Jim Wilson	897
Identity theft	
Mr. Tony Ruprecht	897
Power plant	
Mr. Ted Chudleigh	897
Power plant	
Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn	897
Elmvale District High School	
Mr. Jim Wilson	898
Firearms control	
Mr. Tony Ruprecht	898
Taxation	
Mr. Jim Wilson	898
Multiple sclerosis	
Ms. Helena Jaczek	899
GO Transit tunnel	
Mr. Tony Ruprecht	899

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS / AFFAIRES D'INTÉRÊT PUBLIC ÉMANANT DES DÉPUTÉS

Enhancing the Ability of Income Support Recipients to be Financially Independent Act, 2010, Bill 23, Mr. Barrett / Loi de 2010 rehaussant l'autonomie financière des bénéficiaires du soutien du revenu, projet de loi 23, M. Barrett	
Mr. Toby Barrett	899
Mr. Michael Prue	901
Mr. Wayne Arthurs	903
Ms. Sylvia Jones	903
Mr. Bob Delaney	904
Mr. Glen R. Murray	904
Mr. Frank Klees	905
Mr. Norm Miller	906
Mr. Toby Barrett	906

Separation Distances for Natural Gas Power Plants Act, 2010, Bill 8, Mr. Flynn / Loi de 2010 sur l'établissement de distances de séparation pour les centrales électriques au gaz naturel, projet de loi 8, M. Flynn

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn	906
Mr. Ted Chudleigh	908
Mr. Michael Prue	909
Mr. David Caplan	911
Mrs. Julia Munro	912
Mr. Mike Colle	912
Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield	912
Mr. Frank Klees	913
Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn	913

Essential Public Transit Services Act, 2010, Bill 15, Mr. Caplan / Loi de 2010 sur les services de transport en commun essentiels, projet de loi 15, M. Caplan

Mr. David Caplan	914
Mr. Ted Arnott	915
Mr. Rosario Marchese	917
Mr. Mario Sergio	919
Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn	919
M. Shafiq Qaadri	920
Mr. David Caplan	920

Enhancing the Ability of Income Support Recipients to be Financially Independent Act, 2010, Bill 23, Mr. Barrett / Loi de 2010 rehaussant l'autonomie financière des bénéficiaires du soutien du revenu, projet de loi 23, M. Barrett

Second reading agreed to	921
--------------------------------	-----

Separation Distances for Natural Gas Power Plants Act, 2010, Bill 8, Mr. Flynn / Loi de 2010 sur l'établissement de distances de séparation pour les centrales électriques au gaz naturel, projet de loi 8, M. Flynn

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson)	921
---	-----

Essential Public Transit Services Act, 2010, Bill 15, Mr. Caplan / Loi de 2010 sur les services de transport en commun essentiels, projet de loi 15, M. Caplan

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson)	921
---	-----

Separation Distances for Natural Gas Power Plants Act, 2010, Bill 8, Mr. Flynn / Loi de 2010 sur l'établissement de distances de séparation pour les centrales électriques au gaz naturel, projet de loi 8, M. Flynn

Second reading agreed to	922
--------------------------------	-----

Essential Public Transit Services Act, 2010, Bill 15, Mr. Caplan / Loi de 2010 sur les services de transport en commun essentiels, projet de loi 15, M. Caplan

Second reading agreed to	922
--------------------------------	-----

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Retirement Homes Act, 2010, Bill 21, Mr. Phillips / Loi de 2010 sur les maisons de retraite, projet de loi 21, M. Phillips

Mr. Michael Prue	922
------------------------	-----

Second reading agreed to	924
--------------------------------	-----

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Thursday 22 April 2010 / Jeudi 22 avril 2010

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Creating the Foundation for Jobs and Growth Act, 2010, Bill 16, Mr. Duncan / Loi de 2010 posant les fondations de l'emploi et de la croissance, projet de loi 16, M. Duncan	
Second reading vote deferred.....	871
Energy Consumer Protection Act, 2010, Bill 235, Mr. Duguid / Loi de 2010 sur la protection des consommateurs d'énergie, projet de loi 235, M. Duguid	
Mr. Peter Tabuns.....	871
Mr. Dave Levac.....	876
Mr. Paul Miller.....	877
Mr. Peter Tabuns.....	877
Mr. Robert Bailey	877
Third reading agreed to	878

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mr. Peter Tabuns.....	879
Mr. Jeff Leal.....	879
Hon. Peter Fonseca	879
Mr. Paul Miller.....	879
Mr. Bob Delaney.....	879
Mr. Tony Ruprecht.....	879
Mr. Michael Prue	879
Mr. Reza Moridi.....	879
Mr. Gilles Bisson.....	879
Integrity Commissioner	
The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters).....	879

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Government accountability	
Mrs. Christine Elliott.....	879
Hon. Sandra Pupatello.....	879
Curriculum	
Mrs. Christine Elliott.....	880
Hon. Sandra Pupatello.....	880
Energy conservation	
Mr. Peter Tabuns.....	881
Hon. Brad Duguid.....	881
Public transit	
Mr. Michael Prue	882
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	882

Public sector accountability

Mr. John Yakabuski	883
Hon. Harinder S. Takhar	883

Taxation

Mr. Gilles Bisson	883
Hon. John Wilkinson.....	883

Pesticides

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast.....	884
Hon. John Gerretsen.....	884

Taxation

Mr. Garfield Dunlop.....	884
Hon. John Wilkinson.....	885

Mining industry

Mr. Gilles Bisson	885
Hon. Sandra Pupatello.....	885

Energy policies

Mr. Jeff Leal.....	886
Hon. Brad Duguid	886

Waste diversion

Mr. Norman W. Sterling	886
Hon. John Gerretsen.....	887

Manufacturing jobs

Mr. Paul Miller.....	887
Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis	887

Municipal funding

Mr. Mario Sergio.....	888
Hon. James J. Bradley	888

Power plant

Mr. Ted Chudleigh.....	888
Hon. Brad Duguid	888
Hon. John Gerretsen.....	889

Social services

Mr. Peter Tabuns.....	889
Hon. Laurel C. Broten.....	889

DEFERRED VOTES / VOTES DIFFÉRÉS

Creating the Foundation for Jobs and Growth Act, 2010, Bill 16, Mr. Duncan / Loi de 2010 posant les fondations de l'emploi et de la croissance, projet de loi 16, M. Duncan	
Second reading agreed to	890
Supplementary estimates	
Hon. Dwight Duncan.....	890
The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters).....	890

Continued on inside back cover

C726N
X1
-223



No. 21

N° 21

ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Second Session, 39th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 39^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 26 April 2010

Lundi 26 avril 2010



Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

<http://www.ontla.on.ca/>

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7410 or 325-3708.

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7410 ou le 325-3708.

Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services
Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



Service du Journal des débats et d'interprétation
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400; télécopieur, 416-325-7430
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 26 April 2010

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 26 avril 2010

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the non-denominational prayer.

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

M^{me} France Gélinas: Il me fait extrêmement plaisir de vous présenter, dans la galerie ce matin, M. Stewart Kiff et M. Benoit Mercier. Benoit est le président de l'Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens.

Mr. Charles Sousa: I have with me today individuals from one of the oldest football clubs of Europe. Sporting Clube de Portugal was founded on July 1, 1906. With us today is Augusto Pires, president of Sporting Clube Português of Toronto; José Eduardo Bettencourt, president of the directive of Sporting Clube de Portugal; Rogério Brito, vice-president of Conselho Directivo, Sporting Clube de Portugal; and, of course, Coach Mário Lino, one of the greatest ex-soccer players of Europe. He won a number of awards, and he is here with us.

Remarks in Portuguese.

Hon. John Wilkinson: I'm delighted to introduce some friends and family members of our page from my riding, Andrea Strathdee of St. Mary's. We have today in the member's gallery their friends Mike Payne, John Bullen, Zoltan and Andrea Horcsok, as well as Andrea's grandmother Diane Furtney, and then her family: her mom, Gloria; her brother Billy; her sister Rachel; and her dad, Al, who was a page here just a few years ago.

Mr. Dave Levac: Today I would like to introduce, in both the east and west galleries, the National Trade Contractors Coalition of Canada: the NTCCC. They are here today to speak to the members of the Legislature during their lobby day. I would like to remind members that the cocktail reception will be hosted between 4 o'clock and 7 o'clock in the legislative dining room.

They're led by the administrative assistant, Sonia Cool, and the executive director, the former member from Brant from this House, Mr. Ron Johnson. We welcome them here today. Thank you for being here.

Mr. Reza Moridi: I have the pleasure to introduce page Aliyana Hirji's family, who are visiting Queen's Park this morning: Mrs. Tazin Hirji, her mother; Mr. Naushad Hirji, her father; Mrs. Habiba Hirji, her grandmother; Mrs. Gulzar Murji, her grandmother; Jenna Hirji,

her sister; and Adam Hirji, her brother. Please join me in welcoming page Aliyana Hirji's parents and family.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Today I'm pleased to introduce and welcome ONA nurses from Peterborough hospital: Dale Dixon, Carleen Johnson, Louise Flaherty, Jill Staples, Allyson Langworth, Julie Sokolowski and Markus Knerr, as well as Carolyn Edgar, RN from North York General; Faye Loverock, RN from Toronto East General; Andy Summers, RN and ONA VP for region 3; and Lawrence Walter, government relations officer for ONA.

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I'd like to introduce the family of page Mitchell Erickson from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex: his parents, Brad and Heather Erickson; his brother and sister, Brock and Jill; and his grandparents, Marie and Wayne Erickson.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Today I'm pleased to introduce Rick Fiedoric; his wife, Michelle Chatten Fiedoric; and her sister Erin Chatten, as well as a Rotary exchange student from Germany, Marieke Loening, who are here in the east gallery, enjoying the day here at Queen's Park.

Hon. John Wilkinson: A last-minute addition: Also joining page Andrea Strathdee is their friend Alexa Horcsok. Welcome to the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Notwithstanding he was already introduced, I do want to take this opportunity to welcome Ron Johnson, the former member from Brantford from the 36th Parliament, back to Queen's Park today. Welcome back, Ron.

I take this opportunity to welcome my brother Joe Peters to the Speaker's gallery today. Perhaps he could grow a moustache and trade places with me sometime.

ORAL QUESTIONS

CURRICULUM

Mr. Tim Hudak: A question to the Acting Premier concerning Dalton McGuinty's controversial changes to the sex ed curriculum, which would start sex ed classes as early as with six-year-olds—a policy, by the way, soundly rejected by the vast majority of moms and dads across the province of Ontario. I ask the Acting Premier: Why did Dalton McGuinty simply sit in his seat last Wednesday after the Minister of Education said, "We have consulted with parents" about teaching these sex courses at the age of six years old, when in fact the Premier knew that you had not?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Education.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: In fact, we have consulted quite extensively on this document. Those consultations have been under way since 2007. What we have heard, however, from the people of Ontario, particularly parents, is that we need to do a better job; that we need to do more consultation. That is what the Premier committed to do last week. He said, "We've listened and, as a result of that, we are going to act," and I can assure the people of Ontario that we will most definitely be bringing forward a plan that will engage more parents.

1040

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Sadly, when the minister talks about consulting, she is talking about so-called experts and elite insiders. We stand with moms and dads across the province of Ontario.

We understand that Dalton McGuinty believes that he knows best what is best for our kids; we believe parents do. One day they say they consult and the next day they say the opposite. The Premier in fact said he consulted for two years and then on Thursday, in a spectacular flip-flop, said, "Oh, we've listened to parents the last 24 to 48 hours and now we've changed our minds." And Minister Papatello was hung out to dry when she stood here in the Legislature and said, "We prided ourselves on including parents in every step." That pride was short-lived.

Minister, what changed for Dalton McGuinty to flip-flop in—

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: There's no question that we did consult broadly. What the people of Ontario told us was that they needed more consultation, and that they wanted more parents involved with this. So what the people—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We are less than three minutes into question period and I'm finding it very difficult to hear the minister's response.

Minister.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: Part of the consultation that we had under way: We consulted 700 students. We received feedback from 2,400 individuals who provided us with their ideas on this curriculum. I can say that that is far more than we typically get when we review curriculum documents. It was put on the website, and as a result of that, the people of Ontario told us what they thought about that. As a consequence of that, the Premier of Ontario has said that we need to do a better job and that we need to engage parents in a better way. We are committed to doing that.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: It is hard to imagine who they consulted with, because they came out with a policy that was so out of the mainstream public opinion that it was soundly rejected by moms and dads across the province of Ontario. We stand with moms and dads in the province as making the best decisions for their kids.

We know we have a Premier who obsesses about micromanaging our homes from what we can put on our

lawns to what snacks the kids can bring to school, and now he actually wanted to begin sex education classes with six-year-olds who are just learning to tie their shoes. We rejected that approach. Ontario families rejected that approach.

The Ontario Liberals said that anybody who took issue with this was "living in the Dark Ages." Does that mean to say that you believe the vast majority of moms and dads are living in the Dark Ages? Will you stand in your place and apologize to parents across the province for suggesting that those who oppose these plans are somehow living in the Dark Ages?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: What I can say is that I can thank the parents of Ontario for providing us with their input, and we believe that going forward we will work with them to build the very best physical and health education curriculum that we can.

I think that it's also important to remind the people of Ontario that we have the kind of subject that the members are referring to in our curriculum already. I was a parent and a school board trustee in a school board that implemented the Fully Alive program. Fully Alive, in a very important and sensitive way, delivers this information to students.

We have gone through an exercise where we have reviewed how we deliver the program. What the parents in Ontario have told us is that we need to do a better job, and so we have committed to them that we will do that.

FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the same minister: Minister, I'd say with all due respect, as a trustee, as a public official and as the Minister of Education, you should stand in your place and apologize to Ontario parents who your party said lived in the Dark Ages when they rejected your controversial change of sex ed classes beginning at a time when kids are learning to tie their shoes, at a time that kids are learning the alphabet.

But this isn't the first time that we've seen Dalton McGuinty take this attitude that Dalton knows best when it comes to how to teach our kids: Dalton McGuinty's ill-conceived plan resembles the approach he took in the sham consultations with parents when it came to full-day kindergarten.

I ask the minister: Why did you have Charles Pascal consult with parents over Early Years education to make recommendations that you went and put on the shelf and completely ignored?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, Dr. Pascal has played a very key role in providing us support and direction around how we move forward with our full-day learning initiative. I'm very excited to say that that is going to begin in almost 600 schools in September this year.

I meet with Dr. Pascal regularly. I can say to the people of Ontario that he is very supportive of the plan that we have in place, very excited by it, and he continues to provide us with advice in terms of what we need to do,

how we need to co-operate with our partners in education so that it can be the most successful educational experience for our earliest learners in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: We know that the nanny Premier, Dalton McGuinty, is taking a very paternalistic approach when it comes to our children's education. The minister knows full well that parents told Dr. Pascal they preferred their children spending only half days with kindergarten teachers, other times with ECEs. An overwhelming majority told the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education the exact same thing. But Premier McGuinty tossed aside Dr. Pascal's recommendations and chose the most expensive option of putting kindergarten teachers in the class the entire day.

I ask the minister again: What makes Premier McGuinty so smart? Why is he so much better at deciding what's best for our kids than moms and dads in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: Our government has a record of consulting and working co-operatively with our partners in education and, as a result of that, we have delivered a plan that will support the earliest learners in our school system. We've certainly relied on Dr. Pascal and on educational leaders from around the world to provide us with support.

I think it's important that the members on the other side of the House appreciate that we have jurisdictions from around the world looking at our early learning initiative to understand how we are doing it. They're very complimentary. Just this morning, I met with global education learning leaders. They're very interested in what we are doing and want to understand the work that has gone into it. They are also very interested to see when it rolls out this fall—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: On page 14 of Pascal's report, Minister, you know that parents told him they wanted the option of sending their kids to kindergarten for either a half day or a full day, but once again the nanny Premier knows best. Now, we're seeing school boards sending out letters to parents telling them that if they don't want the half-day kindergarten, they can transfer their kids.

Let me put this straight: If a mom or a dad wants to have their kid there half a day and half a day somewhere else or in informal care, you're telling them, "too bad," that Dalton McGuinty knows best, that if you don't like it, take your kid out of school and send him or her somewhere else.

We reject that approach because we know that parents make the best decisions for their kids. I'll ask you the same question my deputy leader asked on Thursday: Why are you so bound and determined to take parents out of these crucial decisions for the well-being of their sons and daughters?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: Again, nothing could be further from the truth. Parents play a very integral role in determining what program they want for their child.

When they go to register, if their school is providing full-day learning for their children, they can decide if they want to enrol them. If they do, they can decide if they want to have their child in the class for the full day or not. That has always been their choice.

We are offering a full-day program. We know that you are opposed to the full-day learning initiative. We know you're opposed to it because it's costing money. We know you don't understand why it is so important to invest in our earliest learners. We are committed to doing everything we can to enable the success of our students. We are moving forward with this. We have consulted with parents. The response—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

1050

NURSES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Acting Premier. According to a report by Ontario nurses, 2,045 nursing positions have been cut across the province over the past year. Does the Acting Premier believe that Ontario can lose more than 2,000 nurses without a devastating impact on front-line health care in this province?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Let me begin by reiterating our commitment to nurses. We know that nurses are in fact the backbone of our health care system. That's why we have almost 10,000 more nurses working today than when we took office in 2003. By increasing the number of nurses who are working in our system, we're improving patient care and we're strengthening the entire health care system.

We've done other things for nurses, too. We are the first province to have a nursing graduate guarantee, so that when nurses actually complete their formal education they're guaranteed a full-time job as they enter the labour force. More than 8,000 nursing graduates have that.

Our commitment to nurses remains. There are changes in health care that will affect all of us, but nurses will remain the backbone.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Over the past year, Ontario hospitals cut more than four million hours of nursing care—four million hours. That means patients and their families are seeing their local cancer screening programs disappear; they're seeing less support for the elderly, less support for people with mental health issues. How can the minister still claim that these cuts aren't impacting front-line care with statistics like that?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I would recommend that the member opposite actually check some of those statistics. What we are doing is moving services wherever possible from hospitals to the community. That's actually a way to improve health care.

We have a serious challenge in our health care system that actually goes to the core of our health care system.

Unless we make the kind of changes that improve patient care but take pressure off the costs, we will not have our precious universal, single-payer health care system when the time comes for our children and their children to access health care.

These are difficult times in health care, but we are committed to continuing to improve, by metrics that matter to patients, the quality of health care in this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Nurses from Peterborough are in the gallery today. Last week, they were told that their community could get by with 121 fewer nurses. Those cuts mean a quarter of a million hours of lost support for Peterborough families. Is the minister saying that these nurses weren't providing front-line care, or will she admit that the families in Peterborough are losing health services that they rely on?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The situation in Peterborough is one that has been pretty serious. That's why a peer review team was sent there, led by Dan Carriere, the CEO of Southlake Regional hospital. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank them for their work. They very clearly indicated, through 60 recommendations, that this is not a revenue issue at the Peterborough Regional hospital. The issue is that there are some serious management and governance concerns. The LHIN has asked the hospital to come back with a hospital improvement plan by June 30 of this year, which must include a balanced budget by 2012. The Peterborough Regional hospital has been running a deficit for the last 13 years. Clearly, that is not the best use of our taxpayers' dollars.

NURSES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Nurses are being thanked with pink slips in this province. That's what nurses are being thanked with.

My next question is back to the Acting Premier. It's not just Peterborough families that are losing important front-line health services. Nurses have been axed and services have been gutted across the entire province. At Toronto East General, more than 125 nursing positions have been cut, affecting services for children, for people with high, complex-care needs and mental health patients. In Windsor, cuts are being made to care that cancer patients receive, to those who need surgery and to high-needs elderly patients.

Will the Acting Premier be making a YouTube video or will the Premier perhaps be making a YouTube video publicizing these cuts, or was this government hoping that nobody was going to notice?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As I said in the first question, nurses are at the core of our health care system. In fact, if you were to check Workopolis today, you would find almost 500 advertisements for nurses on Workopolis today. There is significant work out there. There is a real demand for nurses.

As we move toward creating a more sustainable health care system, we will continue to rely on the superb work that nurses are doing. Our commitment to nurses, I think, speaks for itself. We've got nurse-practitioner-led clinics across the province, and we're planning more. We've got more nurse practitioners; we've almost doubled the number of nurse practitioners in this province.

I wish the member opposite would actually understand the challenges in our health care system and know—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I would agree that nurses are indeed the core of our health care system. Unfortunately, this minister is hollowing out that very core. The cuts are being felt in southern Ontario and in northern Ontario. In Thunder Bay, stroke victims and dialysis patients are losing the nurses that they rely on. In Sault Ste. Marie, families are seeing cuts to nurses in intensive care and surgical units.

Is the minister telling families in northern Ontario to expect less from their health care system?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: No. The Minister of Health is saying that people in the north can expect more from their health care system. Moving services from hospitals into the community actually results in better care for people. We know that too many people are going to hospitals and are staying at hospitals who don't need to be in hospitals. They would have better service, they would have better care if those services were moved into the community.

Dialysis is a perfect example: People who have to go a long distance and pay the parking at hospitals to receive dialysis three times a week would much rather have that dialysis in their community. As we strengthen our health care system, part of that strengthening will be more services outside of hospitals in the community.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Even the Minister of Health's hometown wasn't spared from cuts. At St. Joseph's hospital in London, there's less support for new moms and their babies and patients who need surgery. At London Health Sciences, families have seen cuts to the breast cancer screening and cancer programs. How can the minister justify these widespread cuts that will have a real, true impact on patient care in this province?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Let me share some of the jobs that are available on Workopolis today for nurses. The Kitchener Downtown Community Health Centre has a job available. William Osler hospital is looking for nurse practitioners. Toronto East General is trying to hire nurses—Rouge Valley Health System, Hamilton Health Sciences, the Niagara Health System and Humber River Regional Hospital. These are just examples of the hundreds of jobs available for nurses in our health care system.

Change does mean that some jobs move to outside the hospital. That does happen. That does result in layoff no-

tices, but there are many, many jobs available for nurses, and there will continue to be.

CURRICULUM

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is to the Acting Premier. When the self-styled education Premier announced he was backing down on the sex education plans, he never explained why he did not announce the policy in the first place. He didn't say what made him think he could get away with consulting only so-called experts and not parents or even his own caucus, or why he made his education minister answer for his ill-fated policy when the matter was first raised in the House, or how he could humiliate his Acting Premier by not telling her he was scrapping the policy before she aggressively defended it.

What makes the Premier think he can get away with it?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Education.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I'm happy to have this opportunity to explain to the members of the opposition that when it comes to curriculum in the province of Ontario, we have a living document. Curriculum is regularly being reviewed.

I'll give you two other examples. We are reviewing curriculum for financial literacy. We review curriculum to infuse the most recent up-to-date environmental information into our curriculum so that what is presented to our students in the classroom is current and relevant for the world that they are growing up in.

1100

The document with respect to the physical and health education curriculum was posted online. There was a significant process. I think it's fair to say that when we talk about consultations, we did more consultation with that particular curriculum document—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: There certainly wasn't enough consultation. Premier McGuinty's sex education flip-flop is not the first time he thought he could get away with avoiding public consultation and then dumping on his ministers. He didn't consult Ontario families or his caucus on the HST, wind farms, pharmacy cuts and cancelling of public review of the LHINs. He made the member for Don Valley East answer for eHealth and put Michael Bryant out to peddle sharia law before hanging his former ministers out to dry when he met with resistance. He routinely dodges questions to him by passing them off. Is that why morale over there is so low?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'm just going to go to the next question. That supplementary had nothing to do with the initial question.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The members will please come to order on both sides.

FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN

JARDIN D'ENFANTS À TEMPS PLEIN

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My question is to the Minister of Education. We acknowledge that the French-language school boards have had successful full-day kindergarten programs for a long time. We recognize the uniqueness of the French-language education system. As you know, we proposed an amendment to Bill 242 so that the French-language school boards could maintain these programs. We requested full consultation with French boards in the francophone community over a number of years before any changes could be made. Why did your government, through your members in the committee, reject our amendment outright?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: First of all, I want to say how very much we appreciate all of the input that we received at the committee on a very important piece of legislation, Bill 242.

The honourable member has identified part of the legislation where he's offered some improvement. We believe that going forward, with the French-language boards particularly and on this issue, we have been working collaboratively with them. We are committed to continuing to work with them to understand how we can move forward with our plan.

We know that there are challenges in the French-language system. We know that there is going to be a need to look for and do a better job of training French-language ECEs. We are committed to working with French boards so that ultimately, they will be able—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Je trouve ça un petit peu difficile d'être ici puis d'écouter la ministre qui me dit qu'elle travaille avec le conseil quand une démonstration d'unanimité sans précédent de tous les organismes œuvrant en éducation en langue française a exigé la flexibilité qui avait été préconisée par le membre du NPD. Les signataires de cette lettre d'amendement au projet de loi 242 affirment haut et fort que le projet de loi 242, tel qu'il est présenté, mettra le développement de l'éducation de langue française en Ontario en péril et menace la viabilité de nos communautés francophones. Votre gouvernement vient de provoquer une bataille linguistique qu'on aurait pu éviter et qu'on pourrait encore éviter.

Est-ce que votre gouvernement va accorder la flexibilité réclamée par les organismes en éducation de langue française en Ontario?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: Our commitment is to provide an integrated full-day learning experience for our earliest learners, and we are committed to doing that in both English and in French. We know that French-language boards have ordered their kindergarten programs differently, and they have been doing an excellent job. We are committed to continuing to work with them so that we ultimately have the integrated full-day learning program in both the English-language and French-language schools.

We know that there are some challenges in getting there, particularly with our French-language boards. I've made it very clear: We want to work with them. We want to do whatever we can to enable them so that they will be able to offer the same kind of programming for French language students. We are highly sensitive to the significance of—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

MINING INDUSTRY

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: My question is for the Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry, and it's about diamonds and the diamond industry.

There's been a lot of talk about things happening in the mining industry in Ontario, but not nearly enough talk about the good things that are happening in the mining industry. Mining in this province provides thousands of people with meaningful employment and helps showcase to the world the natural wonders of Ontario.

Recently in the news, we've heard about the production of one very precious natural element found in Ontario, and that is diamonds. Since 2008, De Beers Canada has been extracting diamonds from their Victor diamond mine near James Bay.

Minister, the people of Ontario want to hear about the good things happening. Can you tell us the most recent developments in Ontario in the diamond industry?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I certainly thank the honourable member for the question, and I'm delighted to speak about the good things happening in the diamond industry in Ontario. Since the establishment of the Victor diamond mine near Attawapiskat First Nation, geologists and prospectors have been seeking out additional sites in the area to determine if there's any potential for more diamond mines. Of course, the first diamonds extracted from the ground here in Ontario were presented last year to the House in our new mace and will forever remain a part of our everyday lives here at Queen's Park.

Tonight, I have the pleasure of attending the unveiling of the first diamonds to be 100% mined, processed, cut, shaped and polished here in the province of Ontario. They are going on display here tonight, right in Toronto, before they're showcased to the world on an international tour next week. These are tremendous diamonds of extremely great value, and they each come with their own certificate showing just where they came from: the great province of Ontario.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: Thank you, Minister. This is great news. Yet there tends to be fear among people that when something good happens, we don't always see the benefits that come from the investment in this industry. With such a wonderful natural resource in the province, it would be a shame if the people of Ontario were not seeing the returns from the diamond business. The Northwest Territories, Canada's other diamond jurisdiction, has taken steps to ensure that they see more than just trucks driving away with their assets in tow.

Minister, I know that Ontario has been recognized as the third-largest producer of gem diamonds in the world. Could you please tell the House what benefits the diamond industry has provided to the province of Ontario?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: The diamond sector has provided many benefits to Ontario. We are now one of the few jurisdictions in the world that features all elements of the diamond industry, from taking them out of the ground to basically offering them for sale at the retail level.

The De Beers Victor mine was a \$1-billion project that has created over 400 well-paying jobs for the people of northern Ontario. Along with these jobs came training for the local residents of Attawapiskat in various trades, all funded by De Beers. More good news: 40% of the employees at the Victor mine are from the area's First Nation population. That's good news. Also, the factory that cuts and polishes the diamonds in Sudbury employs an additional 30 people, which is expected to grow to 50 once the company, Crossworks Manufacturing, has reached full production.

It's clear that the steps this government has taken to create value-added jobs in a home-grown diamond sector are showing real and very positive results, to the benefit of all the people of Ontario.

TAXATION

Mr. Norm Miller: My question is for the Acting Premier. In 66 days, Premier McGuinty will attack family budgets by making everyone pay 13% more for necessities like home heating, gas for their car and other things they use every day. More than a few of the Liberal caucus know that, just like with the sex ed curriculum, Dalton McGuinty rammed these changes through without consulting Ontario families or them. But the Premier's flip-flop on teaching sex education to six-year-olds sets a precedent for dealing with a bad policy dreamed up by elites and so-called experts.

Acting Premier, will you listen to Ontario families, who are already paying more for your health tax and energy tax and can't afford your greedy HST tax-grab too?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Revenue.

Hon. John Wilkinson: First of all, we need to correct the record. I just heard the member, no matter how many times we've introduced this bill, saying that, somehow, there's going to be a 13% tax increase, which is patently untrue. As we all know—because we passed the bill, as has the federal government—for many things, more than four out of five things, there is absolutely no change in taxation.

1110

The member raises the question of energy, and he makes a point. Unfortunately, it's not a factual point. Here's the most important thing: We have worked with the federal government, whom you know so well, because we've decided that we need to reform our taxes and drag it out of the 20th century to get 21st-century jobs, some 591,000 more jobs as a result of \$47 billion

worth of more investment. On this side of the House, we are committed to more investment and more jobs, and we'd ask you to join the 21st century with the rest of us.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Norm Miller: Dalton McGuinty's flip-flop on sex education came after he admitted he hadn't consulted parents. By the looks on the faces of the Liberal caucus over there, he probably didn't consult them either. He did the same thing with the HST, cutting families and caucus out of the process and ending up with bad policy.

In 66 days, you will know just how little Ontario families think of the McGuinty Liberals and their greedy tax grab. In the meantime, I'll let you in on a little secret that the Premier hasn't shared with his caucus: He can't name a single government that got re-elected after bringing in a harmonized sales tax.

Will the Premier prove he is really listening to parents—and even his own caucus—and scrap his greedy HST tax grab?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I'd invite the member to talk to his federal colleague, Minister Tony Clement, who voted for the reforms that are coming into Ontario. If he's predicting that perhaps the Harper government is going to be defeated on that, I'll leave that up to him. He can have that chat with Tony.

Here's the most important thing. The most important thing is that on July 1 we are going to reform our taxes. What the good people of Ontario want to know is: If it's so bad, as the opposition has said, would they actually change it? Are they going to change it? No, I haven't heard that, because they know in their heart of hearts, as they used to say before we decided to bring it in, that it is the right thing to do.

The most important thing we tell people is that you need to file your taxes this year so that you get the benefits of all of the income tax cuts that are available for people. The fact that here in Ontario we have the lowest personal income tax rate on the first \$37,000 of income of any—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. The minister's wrong-headed decision to delay Toronto's Transit City program will result in a short-term paper saving to the province of barely one one-thousandth of its budget, if that. And in the long run, delaying these transit lines will result in more costs to taxpayers because transit, like everything else, gets more expensive the longer you put it off. When will this government realize it has made a terrible mistake and restore funding for Toronto's desperately needed Transit City plan?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think I've answered this question a number of times, and the answer is that we are currently working right now with Metrolinx. Metrolinx is developing a plan to bring forward, to advise us on how

we might move forward. Our commitment is to move forward on all of the projects that have been outlined: the five projects.

In the meantime, it's important to note that projects like the Union-Pearson air-rail link are moving ahead. The money is being spent and the work is being done. The Sheppard project has begun. The Spadina subway extension is in the works. So there's money being spent, there's work being done, and Metrolinx is going to bring forward a plan on how we move forward on the other projects.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: The city of Toronto would like to know when the \$4-billion cheque will be written. It's that simple.

Hundreds of Torontonians are writing to me to oppose the cuts you've made in the Transit City program. They say the minister's cuts will result in slow, overcrowded bus service and will only add to some of the world's worst commuter gridlock. They say the minister's cuts will mean more deaths due to smog, as Torontonians will continue to use polluting cars. They say the minister is harming Ontario's economy by eliminating thousands of high-wage Transit City-related jobs. When will this government admit that it made a serious mistake in delaying the lines and immediately restore the \$4 billion in transit funds it cut out of Transit City's budget?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The language that the member opposite uses is somewhat confusing, because she uses the language of "cuts" and then she acknowledges later in her question that we're really talking about a delay.

I know that there are people in the city, citizens who have spoken to me, who are disappointed that we had to make this decision, but the decision to slow down the cash flow and come up with a plan that would phase in these projects was made in the context of the reality that we are confronting a \$21-billion deficit. We're coming out of an economic downturn. We had to make responsible and prudent decisions on how to spend the tax dollars that are so hard-earned by the people in the province. So we made the decision.

The member opposite knows full well that there's a plan coming forward. She knows full well that we'll be presenting that when Metrolinx brings us that advice. She knows perfectly well—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

TAXATION

Mr. Glen R. Murray: My question is for the Minister of Revenue. Minister, I've been out meeting with people in my constituency about our tax reforms. I have been explaining that even those who make little or no income or who haven't filed in recent years can qualify for a range of tax benefits if they do, including up to \$260 a year for each member of a family from the new Ontario sales tax credit; up to \$500 a year to help senior home-

owners pay their property taxes with the Ontario senior homeowners' property tax grant; and up to \$1,000 for families, including single parents, or up to \$300 for single people in the new Ontario sales tax transition benefit payments. Minister, can you inform the House about the importance of filing your taxes this year?

Hon. John Wilkinson: The member is absolutely correct that under our tax reforms there are a range of new credits, benefits and tax cuts that are now available to Ontarians. I've been attending tax clinics across the province and raising awareness about the special importance of filing your taxes this year, and I want to urge everyone, even those who may not have any income to report this year, to file their tax return.

Why is that important? The reason is simple: It's the only way you can get the money that is rightfully yours. If you're an individual making less than \$80,000 a year, you can receive up to \$300, tax-free, in the Ontario sales tax transition benefit payments. If you're a family with an annual income of \$160,000 or less, you can receive \$1,000 tax-free. And if you have low or modest income, the Ontario sales tax credit, the new one, offers up to \$260 a year—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Glen R. Murray: In a number of recent articles, the chartered accountants of Ontario have voiced their support for our tax changes, saying, "As a matter of principle, CAs are in favour of any change to tax policy that simplifies administration and compliance, while enhancing the competitiveness of business." Rod Barr, FCA, institute president and CEO, says, "The provincial government has taken a number of measures to help ease in the implementation of the HST for Ontarians and we think it's vitally important that people realize that taking advantage of transition payments and sales tax credits requires filing a tax return."

On top of introducing our tax credits, the tax rate on the first personal income tax bracket was reduced starting January 1, benefiting 93% of Ontario personal income tax payers. Minister, can you—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to thank the Ontario chartered accountants for their position. They agree with us that we should not have two governments tripping over themselves trying to tax the same transaction twice, when only once will do.

I think it's important as well to remind people why we are doing this. It's very simple: it's all about jobs—jobs in the 21st century for our good people, for our children and for our grandchildren. To have a compassionate, caring, just society, we need to have people back to work.

Because of this global recession, we are faced with a daunting challenge, but we're willing to make the difficult decisions required, working in partnership with the federal government, to ensure that we have a stronger Ontario and, therefore, a stronger Canada, an Ontario in Canada that has the ability to create jobs and wealth so

that we can have the schools and hospitals, the roads, the bridges, the environmental protections—all of the things that we all value and that we all believe we collectively need to cherish.

TAXATION

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Minister, your government's HST will drastically affect the rental housing industry and the tenants who live in the 1.3 million units across this province. As you may know, about 60% of the rental housing costs currently not subject to PST will face your government's 13% HST. This means that the annual cost will go up by an average of \$400 per rental unit as a result of this HST and other inflationary costs. Your government's actions will prompt a deferral of repairs and maintenance for the rental units across this province. Did your government calculate the impact your HST will have on the repair budgets of rental stock in Ontario?

1120

Hon. James J. Bradley: In fact, the member would know, as the Minister of Revenue has told the House on many occasions, that that is precisely why we built into the tax package that is presented to the people of Ontario—strongly supported by the federal Minister of Finance, Jim Flaherty, who suggested that we move in this direction—the tax credits that are provided to people. There was just a question in the House about filing income taxes for this year so that people are eligible for those particular tax credits—up to \$260 a year, for instance, in a tax credit for individuals. There are new property tax credits that are available to people to help them out.

We ensured that it could not be double-billed against taxpayers, tenants specifically—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: We are talking about the rental housing industry specifically, and a reduction of \$400 in repairs and maintenance represents a significant reduction in the average repair budget. Let me remind you that the capital needs of Ontario's rental stock are expected to accelerate in future years. Hundreds of thousands of units were built in the 1970s or earlier. You must agree that these old units require a lot of ongoing maintenance. Did you take into consideration that your HST will make it so difficult for rental housing providers to absorb these costs that they may walk away from renting units altogether?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I doubt that that is going to happen. I know that when you are in opposition you have the job of painting the worst-case scenario that you possibly can. I have to confess that when I sat on that side of the House, I always painted the worst-case scenario. That's a confession I make to you.

I don't think you'll see that happen. First of all, you'll find that those who own the buildings are required to meet the building code of the province of Ontario. The health units will come in to inspect if there are problems.

There are officials within the municipalities who can do inspections. They're going to be required to continue to maintain those buildings in an appropriate fashion. At the same time, they're going to see some decrease in their costs because of the HST. The input—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

FOREST INDUSTRY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Acting Premier. Last week I toured northern Ontario, including hard-hit forestry towns like Marathon. Northern Ontario has lost thousands of good-paying, value-added jobs. Five years ago the government promised to reverse that trend with a \$500-million forestry sector assistance program, but freedom-of-information requests show that about half of that money is still sitting unused. Why are hundreds of millions of dollars meant to create and protect jobs left sitting in a government bank account?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: It was good to see my colleague in Marathon last week at the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association meeting. I was there as well with my colleagues the Minister of Transportation and the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

There's a great deal of excitement and optimism, may I say, in northern Ontario, particularly in northwestern Ontario, about some of the economic development opportunities that are happening up there related to the Ring of Fire and the northern industrial energy rate that's being brought forward. And in terms of the forestry sector, again there is some real optimism because of the decisions that we'll soon be making about the forest tenure process and the wood supply competition.

Certainly, I look forward to my opportunity in the supplementary to give more details in terms of the forest sector issue that you've brought up, other than to say quickly, if I can, that there are 35 applications that are presently in that are still to be determined to go forward, and those, if they are successful, will bring forward over \$1 billion in investment. I think that's pretty good news for northern Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: There is a value-added jobs crisis in northern Ontario and has been for more than five years. Resources are being extracted, but the processing jobs are disappearing. From Xstrata in Timmins to the pulp and paper mills that dot northern Ontario, families are seeing less opportunity for high-paying jobs.

This government keeps making promises to protect jobs. When will they finally do so and provide northerners with the tools that they need to create and keep jobs in northern Ontario?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: The member and others will very soon be seeing some of the announcements we will be making related to decisions we're making regarding

the forest sector. We've got the wood supply competition that's completed. By March 31, all the applications came in, well over 100 applications for value-added opportunities in the forestry sector. We're excited about that. We're moving as quickly as we can to make decisions related to that, about the opportunities we have to put Ontario's wood back to work.

Indeed, there is optimism. There's no doubt—I'm the member for Thunder Bay–Superior North; I understand the challenges very, very well; I represent communities that have been very impacted by the forestry downturn—we have reason to be optimistic.

The actions taken by our government, including the extraordinary incentives that we put into that that no government has put in before, have made a real difference in terms of bringing the forestry sector back. We look forward to those announcements soon.

GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

Mr. Ted McMeekin: My question is for the Minister of the Environment. Aggressively reducing greenhouse gases to 6% below 1990 levels by 2014 and 15% below 1990 levels by 2020 is a government priority. Significant actions, of course, must be taken in order to achieve this at the provincial level, like closing down coal-burning plants and bringing more clean energy online, protecting green space and supporting the development of green technology.

In this regard, Minister, I was pleased to learn last week of a project in my community led by the Hamilton Conservation Authority that is doing just that by working with our local schools. Minister, can you inform this assembly how this government is supporting this particular project?

Hon. John Gerretsen: Let me, first of all, compliment this member, who has been here for many years, for his total interest in the environment and all issues related to the environment, particularly in the Hamilton area. Yes, he is correct that the Hamilton Conservation Authority is receiving almost \$29,000 for their classroom Grow Green project. This is a project that brings together high school students and elementary students and will increase their commitment to preserving natural areas and preventing climate change through low-carbon-emitting field trips to conservation areas. It's all part of Ontario's community go green fund to support projects that help Ontarians switch to a low-carbon lifestyle and reduce their climate change impacts. The students will gain knowledge of seed collection, tree identification and tree planting, allowing them to naturalize their community parks and schoolyards. This is a great project, and we'll talk more about it in our supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted McMeekin: Minister, I'm proud of the work being done by the Hamilton Conservation Authority to teach our kids about the natural environment and what they can do to reduce greenhouse gases and help us grow greener communities. This is certainly deserving of sup-

port. There is a broad understanding, Minister, that we must take action to reduce our environmental footprint. Ontarians know that we only have one planet and that we have to change our habits and the way we live if it's to survive and thrive.

Minister, it's often local community groups that make a difference. How else is the community go green fund helping Ontarians to reduce their carbon footprint?

Hon. John Gerretsen: We all know that environmental action starts at home and in our community. As a matter of fact, this is the fourth round of funding from the community go green fund. It's in the final round, at this stage. A total of \$1.4 million is providing help to about 33 recipients across this province in a wide variety of projects. Let me just give you a few examples. We have the Clean Air Champions, which is receiving almost \$53,000, through which we're sending Ontario youth national Olympic and Paralympic athletes around the province into classrooms where they will be delivering inspirational presentations to each class on how to become a clean air achiever. We have the FoodShare Toronto program at \$65,000, which is looking at sustainable food choices at their institute. We have the Sault Ste. Marie North Waste Management Council's project, which is to reduce waste by—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

1130

ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Minister of Health. Registration for organ and tissue donation in some jurisdictions is as high as 80%. Ontario lags far behind at 17%. The problem, we believe, is our cumbersome registration system, which still requires that people mail in a registration or attend at a ServiceOntario health card office. Can the minister tell us if she supports the resolution that I tabled in the House last week that would require an online organ donor registration system using the OHIP number, which would allow people to get online, register as donors and significantly increase our donor registration in Ontario?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'd like to thank the member from Newmarket–Aurora for his continued commitment to increasing the number of organ transplantations in this province. We have made some great strides, but there is absolutely more to do. We've increased the number of organ transplants by 47% since 2003. Last year was a record year for transplants. Last year alone, in fact, over 700 lives were saved as a result of organ donations. We have moved to reimburse expenses for organ donors and, of course, increase awareness of the importance of registering as an organ donor.

There is more to do, and in the supplementary I'll speak specifically to the question the member has asked.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: What we know is that one person dies every three days in this country waiting for a trans-

plant. Some 1,615 people in Ontario alone are on a waitlist, waiting for that call to let them know that an organ is available.

What is being proposed by way of an online registration system is practical and it's doable. It will dramatically increase organ donor registration. I ask the minister again: Will she direct her ministry to work with the Trillium Gift of Life Network to implement an online donor registration system in the province of Ontario that will save lives? She said last week that she wants to do everything possible to increase registrations. Will she do this?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We want to do everything we can do to increase the number of transplants in this province. We have an expert panel report that we are currently reviewing. It is, I must say, a superb piece of work. One of their recommendations is an online registry. I can tell you that I am very interested in exploring how we could do that.

I cannot stand today and announce that we are going to have an online registry. What I can tell you is, we're taking the recommendations from the expert panel very seriously, and we know that one of those recommendations is in fact an online registry. But until we have that online registry, I would urge people to go to the ServiceOntario website, download the form and mail it in the old-fashioned way. That act may save a life.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Minister of Energy. Ontarians are facing rising hydro rates, in large part because the McGuinty government is not pursuing all possible cost-effective energy conservation measures. Instead, it's investing in expensive gas and nuclear power. Why is the McGuinty government unnecessarily increasing hydro rates for Ontario families?

Hon. Brad Duguid: No government has done more on the conservation side than this government. We are absolutely committed to building a conservation culture in this province. I just look at our home energy savings program, where we've been investing with consumers, with homeowners: 348,000 have done home audits; 160,000 have done retrofits. That's really helping us meet our greenhouse gas emission goals. It's really helping consumers save. In fact, on average, those families are saving about 23% off their bill.

I will say this to the member: I think we need to do more and I think we plan to do more. We're always looking for new and bright ideas that are in keeping with our opportunity to continue to drive home the need to conserve, because every opportunity we have to conserve is less energy that we have to build.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Minister, notwithstanding any number that you cite, the reality is, on the past Friday you announced energy conservation targets that were far below what even the Ontario Power Authority deems possible and achievable. The McGuinty government is

allowing the Ontario Power Authority to continue to under-invest in conservation by spending 60 times more on new electricity supply than it's spending on conservation. Let's be clear about where your priorities are: 60 times more on generation than conservation. Why are you continuing to put the interests of utilities and electricity suppliers ahead of Ontario families' needs for affordable hydro rates?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Just last week I had the opportunity to issue a directive to our local distributors. This is going to free those local distributors up to be even more creative, to reach out to their consumers, and to reach even more heights and more goals in terms of conservation programs. So we're going to have our energy distributors on-side, the Ontario Power Authority, our government.

This is something that requires more than just the efforts of government; this is something that needs to be built into the psyche of each and every Ontario resident and Ontario business. We're determined to build that culture of conservation in this province. We're not quite there yet, we've got more work to do, and we'll even take some of the ideas from the member opposite if he has some good ideas in this respect, but we're going to continue to make progress on conservation.

MINISTRY OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Rick Johnson: My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. Minister, your ministry has an on-the-ground presence throughout Ontario with many different mandates. Ontarians turn to your ministry for advice about managing nuisance animals, the protection of species at risk, licensing hunters and anglers, and accessing Ontario's vital aggregate resources. Minister, managing Ontario's natural resources in a sustainable manner is the responsibility of all Ontarians; however, your ministry is the lead on this important task.

Minister, 2010 marks a significant point in the organization of your ministry. It is my understanding that your ministry has recently completed a realignment. What effects, if any, will this reorganization have on the mandate of your ministry and how your ministry officials serve the public?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I want to thank the member for the question. The honourable member raises some very important concerns, and I want to reassure all members here that supporting hunting and angling in this province is a priority of this ministry as a part of sustainable management of Ontario's biodiversity. It's especially important to note because this is the first day of the spring turkey hunt.

I'm very pleased to respond to the question because I know some of our colleagues here do not have the full story. The internal reorganization of the Ministry of Natural Resources gives the ministry a stronger ability to develop, coordinate and modernize programs while ensuring the public is well-served. In fact, ministry officials, through the new, streamlined organization process, will

be delivering a higher level of integrated service than ever before, something I'm very proud of. Modernizing the operations of the Ministry of Natural Resources in the interest of all Ontarians is an initiative that has my full support.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Rick Johnson: Minister, despite your vocal assertions here today, many of the organizations that your ministry partners with have concerns about the realignment, and some of our colleagues here have demonstrated a lack of concrete understanding. Specifically, I know that many sector partners, especially those in the hunting and angling community, fear that the realignment has resulted in diminished prominence of fish and wildlife within the ministry. Have the priorities of your ministry changed and does your ministry no longer look to meet the needs of hunters and anglers, who through their recreational activities contribute hundreds of millions to the provincial economy annually?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: Once again, thanks to the honourable member. Since becoming the Minister of Natural Resources, I've discussed the internal realignment with the leadership of the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters and with hunters and anglers I've met around the province. It's important for all members here to know that hunters and anglers will not see any service changes, and that fisheries and wildlife policy will now be handled in the policy division of the ministry.

I would also like to tell the members assembled here and those watching at home that the realignment has had no impact on the special-purpose accounts maintained at the ministry. Revenue generated by the sale of hunting and fishing licenses will continue to go towards projects which enhance Ontario's biodiversity, like the Lake Ontario Atlantic salmon restocking program.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The time for question period has ended.

would like to just take this opportunity to welcome Ron Rabbi from the Africans In Partnership Against AIDS and an advocate against hate laws in Uganda; he's in the east public gallery. Welcome to Queen's Park today. It's a pleasure to have you here.

There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1140 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'm pleased this afternoon to welcome to the gallery Lynda Oliver, Judith Harper, Paul Donnelly and Linda Cowburn of the Northumberland health coalition. They're here today to protest government cuts to beds and services at the Northumberland Hills Hospital. Welcome.

M^{me} France G  linas: I, too, would like to welcome the people from Northumberland who worked so hard to collect many petitions, which I will present soon. They are Peggy Smith, Linda Cowburn, Paul Donnelly, Lynda Oliver and Janice Parker. Welcome to Queen's Park. Thanks for being here.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I to take this opportunity to welcome to the Speaker's gallery—and more detailed comments will be made by members later—Senator Bob Runciman and his wife, Jeannette, to Queen's Park today.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

TAXATION

Mr. John O'Toole: I would also like to recognize Senator Bob Runciman here today.

My statement is as follows: The citizens of Durham riding are increasingly alarmed over higher taxes and fees being imposed by this government. Under the HST, there's an 8% increase on many goods and services as of Canada Day 2010. Less visible taxes include the downloading of millions of dollars in costs onto drugstore operators and pharmacists and their patients. Fees associated with green energy, smart meters and the Samsung deal are being added to the price of electricity, contributing to an annual increase that is estimated at \$350 per family per year at least.

Is there a cure for a government with a tax-and-spend addiction? The cure is accountability. Our PC caucus, under the leadership of Tim Hudak, has an accountability plan to improve transparency in all corners of the Ontario government. This needs to be done immediately. Our plan calls for freedom-of-information laws to apply to all provincial public bodies and for proactive posting of government expenses and contracts over \$10,000. This allows every citizen to be a watchdog of this government.

I would urge this government to stand up for the citizens of Ontario once and for all and to support our leader, Tim Hudak, and the accountability provisions he has suggested in the House.

SOUTH GLENGARRY COMMUNITY AND BUSINESS AWARDS

Mr. Jim Brownell: I rise in the House today to pray tribute to recipients of the recent South Glengarry community and business awards.

I want to start by congratulating Les and Wendy Wert, who were named citizens of the year for their long-time advocacy in the South Glengarry tourism industry. The Werts run the Capricorn Capers bed and breakfast in Williamstown. In addition, the Werts take their guests on tours of the area, educate students on local history and work with a committee to attract more visitors to South Glengarry.

George and Beverley Runions, who run Glengarry Electric, were recognized for business of the year. They started the business in 1975, when George was on work stoppage at Domtar Fine Papers, only to have Glengarry Electric become a local favourite electrical business. George and Beverley volunteer countless hours of their time for the Williamstown Fair and St. Andrews United Church in Martintown.

The Lancaster Optimist Club was saluted for its dedication to helping youth in the area through public speaking contests and programs, essay writing contests, bike safety rodeos, donations to the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario and bursaries for graduating high school students.

The Eastern Ontario Training Board's Youth Merit Award went to Glengarry District High School student Devan Lancaster for her accomplishments as a horseback rider, which include winning the Bobby Greasley memorial scholarship and volunteering to teach others how to ride.

Lyall and Elizabeth MacLachlan of Lachlan Glen Farms took home the Excellence in Agriculture Award.

I want to extend congratulations to all the recipients of the South Glengarry community and business awards. These are the people who make our communities, and especially South Glengarry, great places to live, work and play.

TAXATION

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: Earlier this month, the Premier announced that landlords in this province will not be able to pass the HST cost to tenants in the above-guideline rent increases, or AGIs, as they're known. The government's remarks were nothing more than the usual photo op and attempt to capture headlines.

The reality is that the AGIs are a rarely used tool anyway. On average, there are about 115 applications per year for AGIs, yet there are over 1.3 million rental households in this province.

This government should stop spending all its time on staged photo ops and actually put in place a plan that will help the rental housing industry transition to the HST with a view to protecting tenants. The industry has expressed that the HST will increase industry costs by almost 5% without even taking into consideration inflationary increases. The only discretionary expense that owners have is maintenance and capital repairs.

Tenants across this province are going to be negatively impacted as the HST eats into the maintenance budgets. The government must move quickly to ensure that the capital needs of Ontario's housing stock remain in a good state of repair so that these crucial units can continue to house tenants across our province.

LONDON CLEAN AND GREEN

Mr. Khalil Ramal: This past Saturday was the keep London Clean and Green community clean-up day in my

hometown. This event happens every year and encourages Londoners to pitch in to keep London a beautiful city.

I would like to acknowledge the efforts of all those members of London's communities who came out Saturday morning to spend a few hours picking up garbage, cleaning graffiti off walls and planting trees. These efforts not only contribute to making our city even more beautiful but also encourage sustainable environmental practices and maintain lasting friendships with people in the community. Without the time and effort put forward by our volunteers and organizing committee, the city of London would miss out on this wonderful opportunity to spend a lovely day outdoors for a worthy cause.

I hope to see this event continue in the future, and I hope that the numbers of volunteers will only increase with every passing year. I want to congratulate the city of London and all the volunteers who came out Saturday morning to plant trees and clean up our beautiful city.

PHARMACISTS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It is a pleasure to be here today to speak on behalf of my constituents. I would first like to acknowledge the presence of Senator Runciman and his wife, Jeannette. They have been very good friends of mine for quite some time, and it's really nice to see them back in the chamber.

This past Friday, I had the opportunity to meet with Ishrat Rehmani, Sale Osman, Paul Pineo, Randy Little, Paul Brooks, Vijay Shukla, Tu Chu, Rob Cameron, Peter Barreiro, John Condron and Bassem Nashed. They are community pharmacists in Nepean-Carleton who took the time to share concerns with me over Dalton McGuinty's plan to cut front-line health care.

The message was unanimous: As pharmacists, they are neither business people nor political lobbyists. They instead are people who entered the health care field to help Ontario families, seniors and patients.

1310

As well, my constituency office in Nepean-Carleton has been flooded with hundreds of emails, postcards, petitions and phone calls from residents who are worried that Mr. McGuinty's plan to cut front-line health care will result in a reduction of services, closures of pharmacies and increased prices in our community pharmacies.

As the MPP for Nepean-Carleton, I share many of these concerns, particularly because Ontarians will no longer have access to some of our community's most trusted and highly accessible health care professionals, particularly in our rural areas.

HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'm here to honour the members from Yad Vashem who are sitting in the gallery and who are here to commemorate the horror of the Holocaust and to celebrate the courage of the survivors.

I'm here, as I stand every year, to say the only three words that anybody with any ethical credibility can say

as a Christian, Gentile Canadian: I am sorry. I am sorry that out of 45 million Christians during Nazi Germany, only 150,000 became part of the Confessing Church, and of those 150,000, only 3,000 actually saw as part of their mandate the protection of their Jewish brothers and sisters. I think of my brother Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who lost his life; of Karl Barth, the great theologian of the 20th century, who stood as one with the Jewish people and paid dearly for it.

I also say "I'm sorry" as a Canadian—that rejected Jews at our borders, that brought in anti-Semitic laws, municipally, provincially and federally.

Finally, I am sorry that anti-Semitism is still in our midst. I think of the words of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, who said that anti-Zionism is anti-Semitism.

My prayers are with you. My love is with you. The hope is with you that, as you come back year after year, we say this in a quieter and quieter voice because it's less of our reality.

NEWCOMER SERVICES FOR YOUTH

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Recently, I attended an event at the Newcomer Services for Youth centre in Scarborough-Rouge River to recognize their volunteers. I was impressed to hear the impact this program has had on both newcomers and the volunteers.

Newcomer Services for Youth provides valuable services to youth between the ages of 13 to 24 who are convention refugees or newcomer permanent residents. The centre offers information on adapting to Canadian life, the education system, mentorship, volunteer and leadership opportunities, cultural events, computer skills, homework clubs, English conversation circles and all aspects of job searching.

I would like to share one positive story I heard at the event. A volunteer of Sri Lankan origin explained how he volunteered to become a mentor and was paired with a newcomer Chinese youth. Initially apprehensive about their ethnic backgrounds and cultural and language differences, he was extremely fulfilled by the positive experience. Their relationship grew into a friendship where they both attended cultural events in each other's communities. An interesting outcome resulted: appreciation and understanding of each other's differences, which benefits our diverse community in living and working in harmony with one another.

Many newcomers who benefited from these programs commented about their interest in returning later as mentors.

I would like to congratulate Newcomer Services for Youth in Scarborough-Rouge River for their work in building a better community.

RIDING OF OTTAWA CENTRE

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: This past Saturday, I had the honour of hosting a sustainable community summit in my riding of Ottawa Centre, where many members of my

community joined in a discussion, which lasted a whole day, talking about how we can make our community sustainable. The discussion was around issues such as urban design, local food production and distribution in our community, and also related to the use of renewable energy and the ways communities can participate in the production of renewable energy. I was very honoured to have three very distinguished local speakers who are experts in those areas to talk about those issues and for them to come up with very thought-provoking ideas.

I want to especially thank Paul Kariouk, who spoke on urban design; Chantal Blouin, who spoke about local food production and distribution; and Graham Findlay, who brings a lot of expertise on the issues around renewable energy. We had a very healthy plenary after those speakers so that we could come up with ideas as to how we could make our community sustainable. I will be very shortly doing further consultation through my website—yasirnaqvimpp.ca—and Facebook to get more ideas from the community, and then compiling a report that will reflect some of the thoughts and ideas of my community and hopefully work with them in making sure that the community of Ottawa Centre is a sustainable one.

HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY

Mr. Monte Kwinter: In a ceremony at Queen's Park earlier today, we recognized and honoured 18 Holocaust survivors whose stories of anguish, suffering and survival of both body and spirit are a testimony to the human will to live. These Holocaust survivors, who are in the House today, came to Ontario, rebuilt their lives and were honoured for their wonderful contribution as citizens of Ontario. Those honoured are Luba Drewnowsky, Max T. Eisen, Syma Forberg, David Forberg, Gertie (Gitla) Gotleib, Alexander Levin, Ora Markstein, Leslie Meisels, Joseph Peretz, Herschel Perl, Itzhak Pilc, Rachel Piuti, David Rybowski, Zenia Rybowski, Maia Toivis, Manya Wise, Herschel Wise and Seymour Zweig.

Today we recognize Yom Hashoah V'Hagvurah, Holocaust Memorial Day, a day designated for Holocaust remembrance in communities around the world. This is the 17th year the Ontario Legislature has observed Holocaust Memorial Day, and I'm proud to say that Ontario was the first jurisdiction in the world outside of the state of Israel to officially recognize it.

I have visited Yad Vashem, the Holocaust memorial and museum in Jerusalem, several times. The memorial is dedicated to preserving the memory and story of each of the six million people who died in the Holocaust, and, as a Jew, these memories strike the heart and soul, and every Jew is touched by the Holocaust. We lost loved ones, family members or friends. All members in the community lost someone. The Holocaust echoes through generations. The loss is extraordinary, and at Yad Vashem, that loss is made real. It is concrete. You can touch it.

In the Valley of the Communities, you can stand before wall after wall carved out of solid rock listing the

names of more than 5,000 communities that lived, breathed, had life and in which men and women loved, married, raised children, worked, laughed and worshipped. Today, in most cases, nothing remains of these Jewish communities except for their names forever frozen in the bedrock of Yad Vashem. It was there that I found the name of the city where my father was born, Czestochowa, and the city where my mother was born, Sosnowiec.

The Holocaust reaches out of the past and touches the shoulder of every Jew. The central theme of Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Day 2010 is the voice of the survivors, focusing on the many different ways survivors have contributed to Holocaust remembrance and commemoration over the years.

Holocaust Memorial Day commemorates all those who died in the Holocaust, not just Jews. We also remember those whom the Nazis targeted for their race, their religion, their politics, their disabilities or their sexual orientation. It's important to set aside time to remember all these victims whose lives were taken by the Nazis. In remembering, we bear witness to what these men, women and children endured.

Tragically, other genocides have followed since World War II in Cambodia, Rwanda and in the former Yugoslavia. It is evident that we must continue our struggle to keep alive the spirit of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights approved by the United Nations 62 years ago in the shadow of the Holocaust. The declaration recognized the inherent dignity and the quality of the inalienable rights of all members of the human family as a foundation of freedom, justice and peace throughout the world. It called on the world to protect human rights by the rule of law. We are indeed fortunate to live in Canada and in Ontario, but we must never take our good fortune for granted. We must guard our democratic institutions and democratic freedoms. We must appreciate, nurture and protect them and we must constantly remind ourselves how easy it is to lose them.

On Yom Hashoah, Jewish communities around the world recite a brief traditional mourners' prayer, the Kaddish. On the afternoon of April 11 this year, some of our members were at Earl Bales Park and there were hundreds of people who recited the Kaddish.

On behalf of the victims, the survivors and their families, I would like to recite that Hebrew prayer that is something for which all people may pray. I ask for unanimous consent to allow me to do this.

1320

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Mr. Monte Kwinter: Can I ask everyone to rise, please?

Prayer in Hebrew.

Mr. Monte Kwinter: Thank you.

One line of this prayer translates as: "He who creates peace in the celestial heights, may he create peace for us." We must always remember so that the world will never forget.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

TAXATION AMENDMENT ACT (PUBLIC TRANSIT EXPENSE TAX CREDIT), 2010

LOI DE 2010 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES IMPÔTS (CRÉDIT D'IMPÔT POUR DÉPENSES DE TRANSPORTS EN COMMUN)

Mr. O'Toole moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 42, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to provide for a tax credit for expenses incurred in using public transit / *Projet de loi 42, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les impôts afin de prévoir un crédit d'impôt pour les dépenses engagées au titre des transports en commun.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. John O'Toole: I might explain at the outset that I would like to seek unanimous consent to remove my previous bill on the same topic, Bill 37, because it was slightly out of order. With that agreement of unanimous consent—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you.

This bill amends the Taxation Act to permit taxpayers to obtain a non-refundable income tax credit for expenses that they incur and pay for using public transit after December 31, 2009. The tax credit is a share of the tax credit offered by income tax Canada. If another person pays the expenses on behalf of the taxpayer, that other person is entitled to the tax credit, excepting if the person makes the payment as part of the taxpayer's remuneration.

I suspect that this is to harmonize the transit tax credit with the federal government and to encourage commuters and others to use public transit.

ROBERT W. RUNCIMAN

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I believe we have unanimous consent that up to five minutes be allotted to each party to speak to Mr. Bob Runciman's retirement from the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: It's my privilege today to speak to the retirement of Mr. Bob Runciman, the member for Leeds–Grenville from 1981. To Bob and his lovely wife, Jeannette, I say hello and welcome. I'm glad to see you back here, although it was so much more fun when you were right there.

As I noted, Mr. Runciman was first elected to the Legislature in 1981, and as I would have reminded him in

a House leaders' meeting not too long ago, that was before I could even vote. It was certainly a good long stay here, and although he didn't make that three-decade mark, he certainly made his mark on this place during the almost 29 years he spent in the Legislature.

During that time, he served under three Premiers in a variety of capacities in various cabinets including as Minister of Public Safety and Security, Minister of Economic Development and Trade, Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations, Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services. I'm sure he will correct me if I've missed any, but I think I got them all. He also served twice as interim leader, which I think is a testament to him and to the respect his party showed him by electing him twice as their interim leader.

As he left his final round as interim leader, the Premier spoke to his role as interim leader. On June 4, 2009, we had an opportunity to pay tribute to his role as interim leader, and Premier McGuinty noted at that time: "A predecessor of mine, David Peterson, used to say that the toughest job in the world is to be the leader of an opposition party. I think he was wrong. I think the toughest job of them all has been interim leader of an opposition party—and to grapple with the fomenting changes inside your caucus as various personalities seek to assert themselves, and to garner support and to maintain some sense of order and to assume that high responsibility on behalf of Ontarians." During two separate terms, Mr. Runciman did that role with distinction.

Most recently, before his departure from this Legislature, he served as opposition House leader and tourism critic or, as we called it in my office, "all Bob, all the time." I had the privilege of serving as government House leader and as Minister of Tourism, so in all my capacities we had the pleasure of working with Mr. Runciman. Certainly it was challenging at times, but for the most part it was a pleasure.

As the member for Kitchener–Waterloo noted in her tribute to him on June 4, 2009—I'm taking the opportunity to quote you, Ms. Witmer, which I hope is okay: "Bob has twice had the opportunity to be unanimously elected as our leader since 2004, and although Mad Dog may not have been around from one of the earliest documented references to that nickname in the 16th century"—I note that she said "may not have been," which is a little unkind—"I can tell you that since his election in 1981, he has been madly steadfast and unswerving in his dedication, not only to the people in eastern Ontario, but to all the people in the province."

As I have noted, I had the wonderful privilege of serving as Minister of Tourism for a time. During that time, I had the honour of visiting the Thousand Islands, which Mr. Runciman will remember was celebrating its twinning with the 1,000-Island Lake of China at the time. Together, we hosted a contingent of Chinese representatives on what was a spectacular day in the Thousand Islands in the lovely riding of Leeds–Grenville. I had the opportunity of meeting his wife, Jeannette, that day and of being able to share a beautiful, proud Ontario day,

showing off what great treasures we have here in the province to our visitors from China. As always, Mr. Runciman was a gracious host and did a remarkable job of making our guests feel welcome.

As the child of a member, I want to say thank you to Jeannette, his lovely wife, who proudly served with him for 29 years. I know that you in fact do serve not only the people of Leeds–Grenville but also the people of the province.

I want to acknowledge their daughters, Sue and Robin, who shared their dad with us. I know he's a proud granddad of Iylish, Cassandra and Nick, so to them we say thank you for sharing your grandpa with us as well.

I want to end my tribute today on behalf of the McGuinty government with a quote from the leader during his tribute to Mr. Runciman on June 4, 2009. At that time, Mr. McGuinty said, and I kind of echo his comments here, Bob; I think you will enjoy this: "There will be no hugs from me; I want to make that clear at the outset. But I rise to give expression to the wonderful sentiments that I think we all sense today."

He went on to say, and I want to echo these heartfelt comments: "I want to thank Bob Runciman, MPP, minister, interim Leader of the Opposition, husband, proud father, for all that he has brought to his responsibilities over so many years. He has been dogged; he has been determined; he has been faithful to his principles at all times. I'm not sure there's anything more we might ask of anybody who is privileged to hold public office."

To you, Mr. Runciman, we bid a very happy time in the Senate and a wonderful retirement from this place.

1330

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Welland.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Thank you kindly, Speaker. I'm grateful to Andrea Horwath and my caucus mates for letting me perform this role on behalf of the NDP this afternoon.

I came here in 1988. It was a pretty good time to be a newly elected—and I was young then—young member, because a lot of the greats were here at that time. One of the personalities that was clearly a part of the front bench of the front benches was Bob Runciman.

It was in short order that the Premier of the day, Mr. Peterson, provoked the auto insurance debates. Bob Runciman became a close friend and, interestingly, we found common ground. We were allies in what was, again, a remarkable opportunity for a young, newly elected politician, and I'm grateful personally to the mentorship of Bob Runciman.

I'm also grateful for his friendship, because Lord knows I didn't have a whole lot from my own caucus. His friendship was very special to me. As a matter of fact, during the period of government of that last Liberal Premier from 1990 to 1995, there was a time when I had difficulty getting information from my House leader. The House leader at that time wasn't particularly interested in making sure I knew when certain debates were going to take place, especially when it came to debates on things

like changes to the rules in the standing orders. But Bob Runciman's House leader's office—I remember it well; I remember exactly where it was—always welcomed me. I could always count on them to give me the straight goods. They never steered me wrong. It was a different time—mind you, it was a very different time—but one never left the Conservative House leader's office hungry or thirsty.

We should note, Bob—you were important not just to this chamber and to this community of legislators, but you leaving Toronto has left its mark on the city. Bob Runciman moves to Ottawa and George Bigliardi's shuts down. It was a sad thing. And if I could have persuaded Bob, on that fateful day when he got the phone call, that his departure would have meant the loss of Bigliardi's to yet subsequent generations of Queen's Park-ers, I'd like to think I may have had some impact.

I look for things that we have in common. As I say, I regard him as a good friend. I enjoy his company. I certainly enjoyed working with him when he was House leader and leader, and when he was minister. I looked at the things we have in common. Bob was a trade unionist, and while I was a member of a union only during my student years when I was working out in BC, I was a trade unionist too, and I certainly find myself with many friends in the trade union movement. We have that in common.

I keep thinking about other things that we have in common. Ideologically, we're some distance apart. In terms of personality, I don't think we have much in common. Bob can be very emotional. He can become angry; he can become aggressive and assertive. I don't see myself in that way at all. But as I reflected more, I realized that, Bob, we have yet another thing in common: Mr. Rae didn't like me either.

Also, Mr. Runciman, I owe you a great debt. Some who are old enough will know that I was a minister in that government for a very short period of time—I think it was six months. Bob Runciman has saved me from the ignominy of being the shortest-serving minister of consumer relations, because he served in that ministry for but a month and five days before the fall of that government in 1985. So, to the producers of Trivial Pursuit, I am not the shortest-serving minister of consumer relations in Ontario; Bob Runciman is.

We miss you, Bob; I certainly miss you. You were a great member of this chamber; you were a great advocate—you were a courageous advocate. Runciman never backed down, and sometimes that courage is rarer than we wish. Runciman was fearless, and he was as straight as they come: no backstabbing, no beating around the bush. We need people like that here in this chamber. He was aggressive and fearless in the pursuit of the interests of not just his constituents but, I'm convinced, of his province and country. I'm proud to have been so fortunate to have been elected at the time I was so that I could have had the experience of working with you here.

I am going to have to temper some of my comments about the red chamber now that Bob Runciman is sitting

in it. But I couldn't think of a better choice than Bob Runciman. He will change the people in that chamber, just as he influenced and changed for the better the people in this chamber.

We don't say farewell, Bob. We're confident—I have no doubt whatsoever—that we'll be reading about you in the newspapers. There's surely more than one dipstick in the province that you can comment on. I wish you well.

Jeannette, you are just a wonderful, classy, delightful woman. Bob doesn't deserve you. But I tell you, you make a great complement to him, and I've enjoyed the opportunities we've had to share time and be together at the same places.

To the Runciman family, I share the government House leader's gratitude for sharing Bob with us.

We're better people for having had you here, Bob. This is a better chamber; it's a better province.

Mr. Tim Hudak: It is an honour to rise today on behalf of the Ontario PC caucus to pay tribute to our good friend and colleague Bob Runciman.

Without a doubt, the Ontario Legislature has been a much quieter place without Bob Runciman in it. He was, no doubt, one of the most effective and tenacious MPPs in a generation.

Over three decades in the public service, Bob Runciman never lost that fire, that conviction to fight for the underdog and to make a real difference in the lives of ordinary, hard-working families who pay the bills but are often last on the list of the government's priorities—and of course, first and foremost, to his constituents in Leeds–Grenville.

I also want to pay tribute to his wife, Jeannette. As we know in this business, people often vote for not just the individual but the couple and the family. Jeannette, for your strength and leadership over these many years, we thank you very much as well.

There is no better testament to Bob Runciman's political acumen and hard work than the fact that he was re-elected seven different times. Even when the political tide ran against our party—some tough sweeps in contests against Peterson, Rae or McGuinty—in Leeds–Grenville, Bob Runciman held firm. All the members here today understand what an accomplishment it is to earn and to keep the confidence of your constituents for such an extended period of time.

1340

By the time I was elected in 1995, Bob Runciman already had the reputation as a senior leader in our party, a man who played on the first line and the man the Premier trusted to get the job done in his ministry and for his constituents. The confidence and integrity with which he carried himself inside and outside the Ontario Legislature was something to be admired and emulated as a young MPP. And from those days as a rookie to my current job as Leader of the Opposition, I continue to benefit from and welcome his advice and wise counsel. After all, Bob Runciman has done it all before, and done it well and with passion.

As Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services, Bob Runciman stood proudly behind the police and emergency workers who put their lives on the line for us each and every day. As the consumer and commercial relations minister, he fought for greater business opportunities for Ontario, including something important to my riding: getting the European Union to drop its ban on Ontario icewine. That opened up whole new markets for Ontario's grape and wine industry. And as Minister of Economic Development and Trade, he helped preside over the biggest job boom in the province of Ontario, which led all of North America in job creation. Most importantly, on two separate occasions Bob Runciman stepped in as interim leader, provided that trusted and steady hand and clear, decisive direction to the Ontario PC caucus—twice—through tough times of transition. The fact that Bob was unanimously selected by caucus shows the respect and esteem he commanded throughout our party.

I know it's been a number of months, but the halls of Queen's Park just aren't the same without the "mad dog" on patrol. We miss your warm humour. We miss your deep compassion for the people you represent. But we are happy to see you continuing, as senator, to serve Canadians well with that same steadfast determination and drive.

Bob and Jeannette, on behalf of the Ontario PC caucus, I thank you for all your years of dedicated service. I congratulate you again on your appointment to the Senate and say that, even for a day, it's great to have one of the most effective and tenacious MPPs here in the House with us. Bob and Jeannette, thank you very much.

Mr. Steve Clark: I more than anyone in this House know the big shoes that have to be filled with the appointment of Bob Runciman as a senator. You see, it is Bob Runciman to whom I attribute my interest in politics. Even though I was involved in politics at the high school level, it was an issue that then young Centre Ward Alderman Bob Runciman championed at Brockville city council that first got me interested in municipal politics. When I thought that my career was one in the newspaper business, it was again Bob Runciman who saw something in me and ultimately employed me in his constituency office in Brockville. I owe you a lot, Bob, and I owe you a lot, Jeannette. You're wonderful representatives, you've served Leeds–Grenville tremendously, and a day doesn't go by when I'm in the riding that I'm not asked, "How's Senator Mad Dog doing up in Ottawa?"

Mr. Speaker, as you know, Senator Runciman was unable to make comment in this Legislature because of his appointment, because the House wasn't sitting. So he's asked me to present some comments on the record on his behalf:

"Mr. Speaker, departing Queen's Park has left me with very mixed emotions—thrilled to have the opportunity to serve at the federal level, but also saddened to be departing the people and the place that have been such a big part of my life for almost three decades.

"I was blessed with great staff, both here and in my constituency, some with me for 13 or more years—Lynne Clark, Dianne Tominac, Pauline Connolly and Lynn Campbell—wonderful people and lifelong friends.

"And to the folks in this building, from the clerks' table to legislative research, cleaning staff, security, the press gallery and Ontario's best barber, Frank Filice, I say thank you for your friendship.

"I also want to say thank you for the support I received from my caucus mates and the help given to me over the many years by Barb Cowieson, Wilson Fabroa, Frank Iusi and Joe Garisto. And to the leader who gave me the greatest opportunities to contribute to our wonderful province, Mike Harris.

"Finally, I thank the people of Leeds–Grenville and my wonderful, very patient and generous wife, Jeannette, for always saying yes to my service in this great historic place. It's been an enormous honour and privilege. Thank you all."

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you to all the members.

I want to take an opportunity to say thank you to Senator Bob Runciman. Bob, on behalf of myself, the table and all the staff here at the Legislative Assembly, we want to thank you for the contributions you have made over the years and that we know you're going to continue to make.

I want to personally thank you for the opportunity I had to work with you on a number of occasions on a number of issues. Your presence in this chamber is going to be missed. I will see that copies of Hansard and a video transcript of today's proceedings are sent to you as a permanent memento.

Thank you again for your service and all the best in your future endeavours, Senator Runciman.

PETITIONS

HOSPITAL FUNDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to present a petition to save Northumberland Hills Hospital that was signed by 5,240 people. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the government-appointed local health integration network ... has approved a budget proposal by the Northumberland Hills Hospital ... that includes plans to close 26 hospital beds, outpatient rehabilitation and the diabetes education clinic; and

"Whereas these cuts will leave no outpatient rehabilitation (including physio- and occupational therapy) available for patients in Northumberland county; and

"Whereas this cut leaves all patients with insulin-dependent diabetes without education and support that is vital to prevent serious health decline; and

"Whereas these cuts will result in for-profit privatization of hospital beds and services and new user fees for patients; and

"Whereas private, for-profit, unaccredited retirement homes are not safe or appropriate to house patients who need professional nursing and health care; and

"Whereas the NHH is considered a very efficient hospital in comparison with peer hospitals and the people of west Northumberland have already made a huge sacrifice regarding hospital services";

The undersigned petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government act immediately to protect patients in Northumberland Hills, fund the hospital to maintain the current services, and stop the hospital bed and service cuts."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and make sure that Khaleel has the muscles to bring it down to the table.

ROUTE 17/174

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde: J'ai une pétition provenant de citoyens concernés par la sécurité routière de la route régionale 17/174.

« À l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

« Attendu que la route 17/174 a besoin d'être élargie à quatre voies, du chemin Trim à la route régionale Prescott-Russell 8 afin d'améliorer la sécurité routière;

« Attendu que la route 17/174 a été reconnue par le passé pour sa condition dangereuse ainsi que le taux d'accidents annuel notable;

« Attendu que cette route représente la principale voie d'accès à la capitale nationale pour la population ouvrière de Clarence-Rockland, Alfred et Plantagenet et Hawkesbury;

1350

« Attendu que les comtés-unis de Prescott-Russell ont manifesté leur intérêt à effectuer une étude environnementale destinée à l'élargissement de la route 17/174 en passant une résolution au conseil;

« Attendu que la ville d'Ottawa a passé une résolution au conseil demandant soit à la province ou aux comtés-unis de Prescott-Russell de prendre l'initiative de l'étude environnementale pour la route 17/174;

« Attendu que le gouvernement fédéral et le gouvernement provincial se sont tous deux engagés à fournir 40 \$ millions » chacun « pour l'élargissement de la route 17/174;

« Nous, soussignés, adressons à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario la pétition suivante :

« Nous demandons que les fonds nécessaires soient alloués aux comtés-unis de Prescott-Russell afin de réaliser l'évaluation environnementale obligatoire à l'élargissement de la route 17/174 de deux à quatre voies, du chemin Trim à la route régionale Prescott-Russell 8. »

C'est avec fierté que j'endosse cette pétition en y ajoutant mon nom.

SERVICE CENTRES

Mr. Steve Clark: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas 401 service centres at Mallorytown, Ontario, were closed in September 2009 and 250 jobs were lost; and

"Whereas the community has identified the need for a staffed full-service tourist kiosk as part of the redevelopment of the Mallorytown service centres; and

"Whereas the completion date for reconstruction of these centres could be delayed past spring 2011; and

"Whereas the reeve and council of Front of Yonge township have passed a resolution giving the government approval of construction 24 hours a day, seven days a week to expedite the project;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Transportation accelerate reconstructions of the Mallorytown service centres based on the local council's wishes and commit to enhanced tourist service improvements at these sites."

I agree with the petition, will affix my name and give it to page Darcy.

JOUR DES FRANCO-ONTARIENS
ET DES FRANCO-ONTARIENNES

M^{me} France Gélinas: J'ai une pétition qui vient d'un peu partout en Ontario et qui demande :

« Attendu que le projet de loi 24, Loi proclamant le Jour des Franco-Ontariens et des Franco-Ontariennes, qui, si adopté »—on en parle aujourd'hui—« rappellera aux Ontariens et aux Ontariennes de toute souche que la présence française en Ontario existe depuis 400 ans cette année et donnera la chance à tous les Ontariens et Ontariennes de célébrer le 25 septembre de chaque année;

« Attendu que le 25 septembre est la date anniversaire du drapeau franco-ontarien;

« Attendu que si le gouvernement veut vraiment souligner l'apport des Franco-Ontariens et des Franco-Ontariennes, le projet de loi 24 doit être modifié afin d'en faire un jour férié;

« Nous, soussignés, adressons à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario la pétition suivante :

« Que le projet de loi 24 soit modifié pour désigner le 25 septembre comme jour férié dans la province de l'Ontario. »

Il me fait plaisir de signer la pétition, et je l'enverrai à la table avec le page Khaleel.

TAXATION

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas a duplicated tax system puts our businesses at a disadvantage by increasing the costs of doing business; and

"Whereas a single, unified tax system reduces the burden on businesses by removing the provincial sales tax on goods and reducing administrative costs; and

"Whereas both Conservative and Liberal members of the provincial and federal Legislatures have voiced their support of a single sales tax; and

"Whereas local chambers of commerce, economists and experts are also supporting the move to a single tax system; and

"Whereas the recent RBC Economics report found that the HST is improving the competitiveness of Ontario businesses by lowering the cost of doing business in Ontario; and

"Whereas a harmonized sales tax is expected to create jobs for Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That all parties of the provincial Legislature support the government of Ontario's plan to implement the HST and other tax reforms to benefit Ontario businesses and consumers."

I'll give this to Ahsan.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'm also pleased to read a petition to save Northumberland Hills Hospital services.

"Whereas the government-appointed local health integration network (LHIN) has approved a budget proposal by the Northumberland Hills Hospital ... that includes plans to close 26 hospital beds, outpatient rehabilitation and the diabetes education clinic; and

"Whereas these cuts will leave no outpatient rehabilitation (including physio- and occupational therapy) available for patients in Northumberland county; and

"Whereas this cut leaves all patients with insulin-dependent diabetes without education and support that is vital to prevent serious health decline; and

"Whereas these cuts will result in for-profit privatization of hospital beds and services and new user fees for patients; and

"Whereas private, for-profit, unaccredited retirement homes are not safe or appropriate to house patients that need professional nursing and health care; and

"Whereas the NHH is considered a very efficient hospital in comparison with peer hospitals and the people of west Northumberland have already made a huge sacrifice regarding hospital services;

"Therefore, be it resolved that the McGuinty government act immediately to protect patients in Northumberland Hills, fund the hospital to maintain the current services, and stop the hospital bed and service cuts."

I am completely in agreement with this petition, pleased to sign it and send it up with page Sabina.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have a petition from the people of Espanola in the riding of Algoma-Manitoulin, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario government is making positron emission tomography, PET scanning, a publicly insured health service available to cancer and cardiac patients...; and

"Whereas by October 2009, insured PET scans will be performed in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

"Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario, with the Sudbury Regional Hospital, its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make PET scans available through the Sudbury Regional Hospital, thereby serving and providing equitable access to the citizens of northeastern Ontario."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the Clerk with Tara.

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

Ms. Helena Jaczek: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas some pharmacies have withheld their services or made them less accessible for Ontarians in an unfair attempt to protest much-needed drug reforms; and

"Whereas Ontario opposition politicians are supporting these harmful tactics by refusing to support the reforms that will make prescription drugs more affordable for Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That all members of the Legislature withdraw their support for those engaged in protest tactics that are harmful and misleading to patients requiring prescription medications; and

"That all members of the Legislature support the drug reforms that will lower prescription drug costs for Ontarians and fairly compensate pharmacists for the services they provide."

I agree with this petition, I will affix my signature to it and send it to the table with page Marie.

TAXATION

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas residents of Oxford do not want Dalton McGuinty's new sales tax, which will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals' new sales tax of 13% will cause everyone to pay more for gasoline for their cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for

their homes, and will be applied to home sales over \$500,000; and

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals' new sales tax of 13% will cause everyone to pay more for meals under \$4, haircuts, funeral services, gym memberships, newspapers, and lawyer and accountant fees; and

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals' new sales tax grab will affect everyone in the province: seniors, students, families, farmers and low-income Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty Liberal government not increase taxes for Ontario families."

I will send this with the greatest page in the Legislature, Kyle from Oxford.

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontarians pay more for popular generic drugs for diabetes, high blood pressure and other common health issues than patients in other jurisdictions; and

"Whereas Ontarians deserve fair prescription drug prices so that families and seniors are not charged more than those in other countries; and

"Whereas some members of the opposition have sided with large corporations to preserve the status quo rather than make prescription medications more affordable for Ontario patients by supporting the proposed drug reforms;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That all members of the Ontario Legislature support Ontarians by passing the government's legislation to lower the cost of prescription medications."

I agree with this, I will affix my signature and hand it to page Ara.

1400

CHANGEMENT DE CLIMAT

M. Phil McNeely: J'ai une pétition à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

« Attendu que dans son rapport de 2007, le Groupe d'experts intergouvernemental sur l'évolution du climat des Nations Unies a conclu que, sans des réductions dramatiques au niveau des émissions de dioxyde de carbone imputables à des activités humaines, les changements climatiques pourraient avoir des effets soudains et irréversibles sur les océans, les glaciers, les terres, les littoraux et les espèces; et

« Attendu qu'aucun groupe, pays ou continent n'assume la responsabilité des changements climatiques mais que tous les êtres humains sont collectivement responsables d'y apporter une solution; et

« Attendu que la production de gaz à effet de serre a augmenté de 27 % au-dessus des niveaux de 1990 au Canada; et

« Attendu que nos chefs élus ont la responsabilité de rendre compte aux membres du public de leurs gestes pour enrayer la problématique des changements climatiques par égard pour la redevabilité; et

« Attendu que les jeunes en particulier, héritiers éventuels de cette Terre, notre seul demeure, démontrent un intérêt spécial pour cette question;

« Nous, les soussignés, adressons une pétition à l'Assemblée législative pour demander que l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario adopte rapidement le projet de loi 6, la Loi visant à augmenter la sensibilisation aux changements climatiques ».

C'est signé par Nishaal Laperrière, Emily Monroe et Isabelle Tardif de l'école Gisèle-Lalonde à Orléans. J'envoie ça à la table avec Courtney.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORDER OF BUSINESS

TRAVAUX DE LA CHAMBRE

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I believe that we have unanimous consent regarding An Act to proclaim Franco-Ontarian Day, 2010.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

L'hon. Monique M. Smith: Je propose que l'ordre visant la deuxième lecture du projet de loi 24, la Loi proclamant le Jour des Franco-Ontariens et des Franco-Ontariennes, soit pris en considération immédiatement et que jusqu'à 20 minutes soient allouées à chaque parti reconnu pour le débat suite à la deuxième lecture, suivant lequel le Président mettra aux voix la question de la deuxième lecture du projet de loi sans plus de débat ni d'amendements; et que suite à l'adoption du projet de loi en deuxième lecture, l'ordre visant la troisième lecture du projet de loi soit pris en considération immédiatement et que le Président mette la question aux voix sans plus de débat ni d'amendements; et que dans le cas de dissidence, on limite le délai avant la sonnerie d'appel à cinq minutes.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

FRANCO-ONTARIAN DAY ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LE JOUR DES FRANCO-ONTARIENS ET DES FRANCO-ONTARIENNES

M^{me} Meilleur moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 24, An Act to proclaim Franco-Ontarian Day /
Projet de loi 24, Loi proclamant le Jour des Franco-Ontariens et des Franco-Ontariennes.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Je vais partager mon temps avec le député de Glengarry–Prescott–Russell.

Le mois dernier, à l'occasion de la présentation du projet de loi pour la reconnaissance du 25 septembre comme le Jour des Franco-Ontariens et des Franco-Ontariennes, j'avais demandé l'appui de mes collègues de tous les partis politiques. Aujourd'hui, ensemble, nous complétons ce beau projet, et je suis très reconnaissante de la belle unanimité démontrée par l'Assemblée législative.

Au nom de tous les francophones de l'Ontario, je tiens à remercier chaleureusement le premier ministre McGuinty et tous mes collègues des trois partis politiques.

Ce projet de loi revêt, bien sûr, une signification symbolique profonde pour les Franco-Ontariennes et les Franco-Ontariens. Il affirme à nouveau l'apport extraordinaire de l'un des peuples fondateurs du Canada à l'édification de l'Ontario depuis la Confédération et bien avant.

Les célébrations du 400^e anniversaire de la présence française au Haut-Canada et en Ontario vont nous amener à accentuer notre sentiment d'appartenance tout au long des prochaines années. La communauté franco-ontarienne célèbre aussi cette année le 100^e anniversaire de son organisme porte-parole, l'Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario, ainsi que le 35^e anniversaire du drapeau franco-ontarien. Je veux d'ailleurs saluer bien chaleureusement la présidente de l'Assemblée, madame Mariette Carrier-Fraser, qui est présente ici aujourd'hui.

Je veux aussi souligner la présence de plusieurs représentants de nos institutions franco-ontariennes. Je vois ici des conseils scolaires qui sont représentés, les collèges, nos universités bilingues, des gens du domaine économique, nos syndicats, l'AFMO. Tous ceux qui se sont déplacés aujourd'hui vous démontrent très bien l'importance de ce projet de loi.

Je veux aussi remercier cette Assemblée d'avoir proposé la date du 25 septembre comme Jour des Franco-Ontariens et des Franco-Ontariennes. Cette date coïncide avec la célébration annuelle du drapeau franco-ontarien, un étendard de fierté qui a 35 ans cette année.

J'aimerais également remercier et saluer les nombreuses personnes qui se sont déplacées de partout pour être ici aujourd'hui et qui représentent plusieurs organisations francophones en Ontario. Comme vous le voyez, il y a beaucoup de gens qui voulaient être ici avec nous pour assister à ce moment historique.

Comme vous le savez, il y a tellement de gens qui ont contribué à l'avancement de la communauté francophone au cours des derniers siècles. J'aimerais pouvoir les nommer afin de leur rendre honneur.

Je pense, bien entendu, à Samuel de Champlain et à Étienne Brûlé.

Je pense, bien entendu, aux pionniers du secteur de l'éducation des dernières décennies, dont, par exemple, le

premier président de l'ACFÉO, le Sénateur Napoléon Belcourt.

Je pense également à Almanda Walker-Marchand, fondatrice et présidente générale de la Fédération des femmes canadiennes-françaises de 1914 à 1946.

Je suis fière que l'arrière-petit-fils de Samuel Genest soit aujourd'hui le sous-ministre délégué aux affaires francophones. M. Genest, l'arrière-grand-père de Paul Genest, a joué un rôle majeur dans la contestation du règlement 17, qui est la fondation de notre système d'éducation en français.

La présente Loi sur les services en français est le fruit du travail acharné d'un amoureux de la langue française : M. Bernard Grandmaître. En tant que député et ministre dans le gouvernement de David Peterson, il a apporté une contribution significative à l'épanouissement de notre communauté au cours des 20 dernières années.

Finalement, je ne peux passer sous silence la contribution de ma bonne amie Gisèle Lalonde. Elle a contribué d'une manière significative à la lutte pour les services de santé en français en tant que présidente de SOS Montfort.

Il ne s'agit que d'une infime partie des gens exceptionnels qui ont démontré beaucoup de courage et de conviction.

Je tenais aujourd'hui à saluer le cheminement extraordinaire de la communauté francophone depuis 1867, un cheminement qui explique toute la fierté qui l'anime et l'optimisme qui lui permet d'envisager un avenir encore meilleur en Ontario.

Vous me permettez maintenant de vous parler du présent et de l'avenir des francophones et des francophiles de l'Ontario.

Au cours des dernières années, le gouvernement a appuyé sans relâche l'avancement des conseils scolaires francophones au même titre que les conseils scolaires anglophones de la province. Cet appui a produit des résultats de taille, et j'en suis très fière. Grâce aux nombreuses initiatives touchant à la qualité de l'éducation, à l'accès, à la petite enfance, à la formation des enseignantes et des enseignants et à l'appui aux parents francophones, les élèves francophones et francophiles de l'Ontario se placent, année après année, au sommet de la réussite scolaire. Quand les élèves de l'Ontario connaissent du succès, toute la société ontarienne s'érige en une société plus prospère. C'est ce succès que l'on reconnaît aujourd'hui dans la nouvelle loi.

1410

Les soins de santé en Ontario sont maintenant parmi les meilleurs soins de santé offerts au Canada et même dans le monde entier. Depuis plusieurs années, le gouvernement s'est attaqué aux défis de santé propres aux francophones de l'Ontario, surtout dans les régions plus rurales ou moins peuplées où l'on retrouvait des problématiques plus sérieuses qu'ailleurs. On peut maintenant croire que les francophones, à l'instar de leurs concitoyens anglophones, sont progressivement en meilleure santé grâce aux services de santé améliorés.

C'est ça qu'on souligne aujourd'hui en adoptant une loi célébrant les Franco-Ontariens.

Chers collègues, l'égalité entre citoyens se manifeste de multiples façons. Le système de la justice et les services sociaux jouent un rôle particulièrement important dans l'application du traitement équitable de chaque citoyen. Je tiens donc à signaler le travail exemplaire que l'Ontario accomplit dans les services de justice et les services sociaux en français. En Ontario, un citoyen francophone a maintenant les mêmes droits et les mêmes privilèges que tous les citoyens. La loi que l'on adopte aujourd'hui rappellera annuellement cette égalité de fait entre citoyens, et j'en suis très heureuse.

Il y a bien d'autres raisons de jeter un regard optimiste vers l'avenir francophone en Ontario. Mais permettez-moi de signaler qu'il y a aussi quelques inquiétudes au sein de la communauté francophone lorsqu'elle réfléchit collectivement sur ce qui pourrait menacer son avenir. Parmi celles-ci, il faut mentionner l'assimilation potentielle chez les jeunes, surtout dans un contexte où la télécommunication et l'Internet sont plus souvent qu'autrement en anglais. Je pense aussi à l'arrivée de nombreux immigrants francophones et francophiles en Ontario et à leur pleine intégration dans les réseaux francophones. Je me réfère à une population vieillissante.

Si le passé est garant de l'avenir, nous allons ensemble surmonter ces défis et réussir là aussi.

En terminant, j'exprime donc le souhait que la tenue annuelle du Jour des Franco-Ontariens et des Franco-Ontariennes permettra une sensibilisation continue sur ces enjeux. J'ai confiance que la nouvelle loi va aider à atténuer ces inquiétudes bien fondées au sein de la plus grande communauté francophone du Canada et à l'extérieur du Québec.

Chers collègues, je ne saurais mieux dire que la présidente de l'Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario. Selon elle, « Il souffle sur l'Ontario un nouveau vent identitaire fort. » L'appui unanime de tous les députés aujourd'hui en faveur de l'adoption de la nouvelle loi proclamant le 25 septembre « Jour des Franco-Ontariens et des Franco-Ontariennes » contribue encore une fois à cette énergie vive qui nourrit ce vent identitaire qui servira si bien les aspirations futures de la communauté francophone.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

M. Peter Shurman: Je vais partager les 20 minutes avec mes collègues de Wellington-Halton Hills, Simcoe North et Nepean-Carleton.

À titre de porte-parole de l'opposition pour les affaires francophones, je suis heureux de parler du projet de loi 24, une loi pour déclarer le 25 septembre le Jour des Franco-Ontariens et des Franco-Ontariennes. D'abord, permettez-moi de souhaiter la bienvenue à nos invités qui sont ici aujourd'hui pour les débats.

Nous, les membres du caucus du Parti conservateur, appuyons sans doute ce projet de loi. Les invités présents aujourd'hui ne sont peut-être pas conscients du fait que notre parti appuie tellement ce projet de loi, au point que

j'ai proposé son adoption le jour où il a été introduit. Toutefois, ceci allait à l'encontre de l'horaire du gouvernement, et ma proposition pour un consentement unanime pour l'adoption de cette loi fut refusée par les libéraux.

We in the PC caucus, of course, support this bill. The guests who are here today may not be aware that our party was so supportive of this bill that I proposed passing it on the day it was introduced, but clearly that ran contrary to the government's agenda, and my request for unanimous consent for immediate passage was denied by the Liberals. I'm pleased that it's being passed today.

Alors, nous voici. Le projet de loi, quoique symbolique, reconnaît officiellement une journée qui a toujours été significative pour la communauté francophone au cours des derniers 35 ans. Le 25 septembre 1975, le drapeau francophone vert et blanc a été levé pour la première fois à l'Université de Sudbury. Créé par Gaétan Gervais, un professeur d'histoire, et Michel Dupuis, un étudiant en sciences politiques, le drapeau fut adopté par l'Association canadienne-française de l'Ontario en 1977. Depuis, le drapeau fait partie de plusieurs événements et célébrations de la communauté franco-ontarienne.

Ce projet de loi nous donne l'occasion de reconnaître le rôle spécial qu'occupe la communauté francophone dans l'histoire de notre province. La présence francophone en Ontario remonte à 400 ans. En 1610, Étienne Brûlé était l'un des premiers à explorer la province. La première mission jésuite a été établie à Ste-Marie Among the Hurons. Cette mission était un des premiers peuples fondateurs de notre merveilleuse nation.

Nous avons vu des vagues d'immigration francophone dans la région Détroit/Windsor au 18^e siècle ainsi que dans les régions est et nord-est de l'Ontario au 19^e siècle et au début du 20^e siècle.

Le Droit, le journal quotidien francophone de l'Ontario, dessert la communauté francophone depuis 1913. Par surcroît, 17 autres communautés sont desservies par des journaux hebdomadaires francophones.

En tant que parti gouvernant en Ontario par la majorité du 20^e siècle, le Parti conservateur a contribué non seulement à reconnaître l'importance de la communauté francophone en Ontario mais aussi à promouvoir et à conserver l'aspect unique que tient cette communauté en Ontario.

As the governing party in Ontario for the majority of the 20th century, the PC Party has been instrumental in not only acknowledging the importance of the Franco-Ontarian community but promoting and preserving the unique place it holds in Ontario.

La clé de la préservation de toute culture est la préservation et la promotion de la langue. Ainsi, en 1969, des écoles de langue française ont été établies aux niveaux élémentaire et secondaire en Ontario.

L'année suivante, le Bureau du coordonnateur provincial des services en français a été chargé de l'administration des services gouvernementaux de langue française. En 1985, le bureau est devenu l'Office des affaires francophones.

En 1984, le français a reçu le même statut de langue officielle que l'anglais dans le système judiciaire de l'Ontario.

En 1997, il y a eu la création de 12 conseils scolaires de langue française avec un financement équitable à celui des conseils scolaires de langue anglaise.

Cette même année, l'Office des affaires francophones, en collaboration avec le ministère du Solliciteur général, a développé un plan stratégique pour augmenter les services afin d'aider les femmes francophones victimes de violence.

Dans le but de poursuivre son engagement envers l'éducation en langue française, en 2000, le gouvernement PC a alloué quatre millions de dollars pour former des spécialistes afin d'identifier les jeunes francophones ayant besoin de services éducatifs spéciaux.

Cette même année, une stratégie de « marketing » touristique a été conçue pour la communauté francophone de l'Ontario.

En 2001, lorsque le gouvernement PC a créé le Fonds d'aide au développement de la petite enfance, 5 % des fonds ont été alloués pour des projets à l'intérieur de communautés francophones. Deux ans plus tard, mon collègue, en tant que ministre des Transports et député de Newmarket-Aurora, a introduit la plaque d'immatriculation franco-ontarienne.

De crainte d'être accusé de pencher uniquement sur les accomplissements des gouvernements PC successifs, je désire reconnaître les mesures prises par le député de Glengarry-Prescott-Russell. Son projet de loi d'initiative parlementaire pour reconnaître le drapeau franco-ontarien en tant qu'emblème officiel de la province a été adopté par tous les partis en 2001. Il est juste de dire que le projet de loi présenté aujourd'hui vient compléter l'histoire du drapeau franco-ontarien, qui a débuté il y a 35 ans.

1420

Lest I be accused of concentrating solely on achievements of successive PC governments, I want to recognize the actions of the member for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell. His private member's bill to recognize the Franco-Ontarian flag as an official emblem of the province was passed with all-party support in 2001. It's accurate to say that the bill before us today completes the story which began 35 years ago of the Franco-Ontarian flag, which I proudly wear on my lapel today.

It is not only through these governmental initiatives but also through the tenacity and spirit of the Franco-Ontarian community that the French language and culture remain a vital and integral part of the fabric of Ontario society.

La langue et la culture françaises demeurent des parties intégrantes et fondamentales de la société ontarienne et ce non seulement par l'entremise des initiatives gouvernementales, mais aussi par la ténacité et le courage de la communauté franco-ontarienne. Merci.

Interruption.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Stop the clock for a minute. I would ask our guests not to applaud.

It is the tradition of this House that they witness the debate but not take part in the debate. Kindly curb your enthusiasm. Thank you.

Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Il me fait plaisir aujourd'hui d'ajouter ma voix à celles de mes collègues qui ont parlé avant moi en appui du projet de loi 24.

J'aimerais commencer par parler un peu au sujet des contributions de la communauté francophone de ma région, moi qui représente le comté de Nickel Belt dans le nord-est de l'Ontario.

Dans le Nord-Est, dans Nickel Belt, nous avons le plaisir d'avoir une communauté francophone forte et vibrante, tant dans sa langue que dans sa culture. Je suis fière d'être du nord de l'Ontario et je suis encore plus fière d'être franco-ontarienne. Plusieurs communautés dans ma circonscription ont une forte représentation francophone, que l'on parle des communautés comme Azilda, Chelmsford, Hanmer, Val Caron, Val Therese, Gogama et Foleyet—si on regarde plus au sud de mon comté, il y a Alban dans la Rivière des Français. En fait, on a récemment attribué à une résidente de Nickel Belt l'Ordre de la Pléiade. C'était pour reconnaître les efforts de M^{me} Gisèle Chrétien, une résidente de Hanmer, qui a été la présidente du Collège Boréal. On en a profité également pour reconnaître M. Denis Hubert-Dutrisac, qui est présentement le président du Collège Boréal. Ces deux personnes sont des promoteurs de la culture francophone. Leurs travaux et leurs efforts, ainsi que les travaux et les efforts de plusieurs membres de leur équipe, sont évidents dans tous les coins de Nickel Belt.

Le Collège Boréal est important pour le Nord-Est, et vraiment, pour toute la francophonie. Je suis fière que j'ai à côté de moi M. Marchese et un autre de mes collègues, M. Bisson, qui étaient ici dans la Chambre en 1994-1995 lorsque le gouvernement néo-démocrate a créé le Collège Boréal. C'était un investissement de taille et un investissement controversé à un temps où notre province faisait face—à ce temps-là, c'était la plus grosse récession économique que l'Ontario n'avait jamais vécue. Il y avait beaucoup d'opposition à financer un collège francophone, mais le gouvernement néo-démocrate était fier d'appuyer, non seulement par ses paroles mais également par son investissement, un collège francophone qui est devenu le Collège Boréal.

Vendredi, j'étais au Collège Boréal et j'étais très fière de voir le président et le président du conseil nous annoncer le projet de société qui est en train de prendre vie au Collège Boréal. Mais ça m'a fait penser : si cela n'avait pas été un gouvernement néo-démocrate qui a fait ces investissements-là pendant un temps de récession économique contre une volonté politique qui n'était pas vraiment souriante aux francophones—cela a été suivi par huit ans du gouvernement conservateur au niveau provincial, et je pense qu'eux, ils n'auraient jamais financé Boréal. Ça m'a fait penser : wow. On a fait tout ce chemin-là avec notre collège francophone. On en est rendu à un projet de communauté qui voit le jour; ça, vraiment, est grâce à un gouvernement néo-démocratique

qui rajoute l'acte à la parole. Ça fait partie des accomplissements des gens francophones du Nord, dont je suis très fière.

Si on continue à voyager dans le nord-est de l'Ontario, on peut voir les contributions de différentes communautés ainsi que leur impact sur la francophonie de la province. Quand tu suis la 11 dans le nord de l'Ontario—on pense à Chapleau, à Timmins, à Kapuskasing, à Hearst, à Dubreuilville, Smooth Rock, Cochrane, Elliot Lake, et la liste continue, tout plein de petits villages, de petites villes dans le nord-est de l'Ontario—le français n'est pas toujours minoritaire. En fait, le français est souvent la langue utilisée dans les magasins, dans les restaurants, dans la rue. Le français est vivant et vibrant dans certains coins de la province, et ça, c'est quelque chose qui vaut la peine d'être souligné et quelque chose qui vaut la peine d'être célébré. Les Franco-Ontariens et les Franco-Ontariennes sont extrêmement fiers de leur héritage et de leur contribution à une communauté forte.

À Sudbury, nous célébrons déjà le 25 septembre car, comme vous le savez tous, il y a 35 ans, M. Gaétan Gervais, professeur d'histoire à l'Université Laurentienne, et M. Michel Dupuis, étudiant à l'université, ont créé le drapeau franco-ontarien que nous utilisons partout dans la province comme symbole.

J'aimerais remercier mon collègue de Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, qui était le chef de file pour apporter cette reconnaissance du drapeau franco-ontarien à la grandeur de la province.

J'aimerais revenir un petit instant et vous parler un peu de M. Gaétan Gervais. M. Gervais est le créateur du drapeau, et bien, il a encore son drapeau original. C'est un drapeau de grandeur normale qui a été fait à la main. Donc, quand tu regardes le drapeau—vous le connaissez tous : un côté blanc, un côté vert, le lis et tout ça—tu peux voir que cela a été découpé à la main et que cela a été cousu à la main. C'était le premier drapeau. Il l'a gardé dans son bureau longtemps. Maintenant, il le garde bien précieusement chez lui, mais le sort une fois par année, le 25 septembre, pour que toute la communauté puisse le voir, et il le partage avec nous.

M. Gaétan Gervais est professeur d'histoire à l'Université Laurentienne et il s'intéresse surtout à l'histoire de l'Ontario français. Il est codirecteur du Dictionnaire des écrits de l'Ontario français. M. Gervais est également auteur de plusieurs livres importants pour la francophonie ontarienne, qu'on parle de L'Ontario français : Des Pays-d'en-Haut à nos jours, qui a été publié par le Centre franco-ontarien de ressources pédagogiques en 2004; ou Des gens de résolution. Du « Canada français » à l'« Ontario français », qui a été publié à Sudbury par Prise de parole; ou encore Les Jumelles Dionne et l'Ontario français, encore publié par les éditeurs Prise de parole à Sudbury. M. Gervais est instrumental dans le développement de la francophonie—un Sudburien, en fait, un résident de Nickel Belt, dont nous sommes tous très fiers.

Donc, les créateurs avaient pensé—M. Gervais et M. Dupuis—à un drapeau vert et blanc. Le vert représente la

verdure de nos printemps ici en Ontario. Je sais que dans Nickel Belt, le printemps est arrivé, mais on ne voit pas beaucoup de vert. Il y a du petit vert—tant, tant, tant—qui commence. Mais dans le sud de l'Ontario—nous sommes à Toronto à ce moment—le printemps est là. Les couleurs vertes, tendres de toutes les saveurs, sont là. C'est de toute beauté. Il sort notre drapeau; il le montre fièrement. Le blanc, également, est de nos longs hivers et de la neige. Il ne reste plus de la neige à ce moment, même pas dans le nord de l'Ontario, mais on sait tous que la neige fait partie de l'Ontario et de qui on est. Notre drapeau représente ça aussi. La fleur de lis témoigne de notre appartenance à la francophonie internationale, et la fleur de trille représente l'enracinement des Franco-Ontariens et des Franco-Ontariennes dans la terre de cette province.

1430

Sa création était un moment très spécial, non seulement pour Sudbury, mais pour toute la province. Ce drapeau représente notre héritage, notre culture et notre langue. Je suis très fière de pouvoir dire qu'il a été créé à Sudbury et que l'on a choisi la journée du 25 septembre comme la journée des Franco-Ontariens et des Franco-Ontariennes. Pour moi, c'est quelque chose qui va être précieux pour toutes les générations à venir.

Je suis également très fière qu'il a été créé à l'Université Laurentienne. L'Université Laurentienne est au cœur de notre communauté dans le Nord-Est, une université qui est devenue partie intégrante par l'implication de ses professeurs et de ses étudiants, etc. On peut voir également le développement de l'éducation en langue française à l'Université Laurentienne, et on peut être fier de ça aussi.

Le mouvement d'avoir un jour franco-ontarien désigné est, bien sûr, à la base surtout un geste symbolique. On désigne la journée du 25 septembre. C'est un geste certainement agréable et amical de la part du gouvernement, mais on se demande souvent, comment significatif est-ce que la désignation va être? Je dois dire qu'ici à Queen's Park, nous avons créé beaucoup de journées de ce genre, mais si je demandais à mes collègues, ou même à ceux dans les gradins, s'ils pouvaient les nommer, je dirais qu'il y en aurait beaucoup moins. En Ontario, si vous regardez le calendrier officiel, on reconnaît environ une douzaine de ces journées à toutes les semaines. Il y en a beaucoup. Je dirais même qu'il y en a beaucoup, beaucoup. La grande majorité passent plus ou moins inaperçues, sauf pour le public cible, bien entendu : les gens qui sont directement impliqués dans cette journée et les gens qui veulent la souligner.

Il est sûr que je suis contente qu'on déclare une journée pour les Franco-Ontariens et les Franco-Ontariennes. C'est un geste symbolique important—c'est vraiment au côté de la signification qu'il va falloir s'assurer que ça demeure important.

Il y avait un groupe de personnes, de Franco-Ontariens et de Franco-Ontariennes en Ontario, qui auraient aimé que le gouvernement aille un pas plus loin, qui auraient aimé profiter de l'élan de la lancée de la reconnaissance

du 25 septembre pour en faire un jour férié. Je comprends très bien le désir de différentes associations que les étudiants et les étudiantes soient en classe ce jour-là pour qu'ils puissent participer aux célébrations.

Comme je vous dis, à Sudbury, ça fait 35 ans qu'on souligne l'anniversaire du drapeau le 25 septembre. C'est quelque chose d'important. J'y participe à chaque année. À Chelmsford, ils organisent un gros tintamarre dans les différentes écoles. Ils font de différentes activités qui sont très importantes. Mais quand on compare ça à l'impact qu'une journée fériée reconnaissante l'apport des Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes pourrait avoir, il y a quand même une discussion qui aurait dû avoir lieu mais qui n'aura jamais lieu.

Je veux faire quelques commentaires. Je suis quand même représentante dans l'opposition. J'ai aimé le discours que la ministre a fait, ainsi que celui de mon collègue de Thornhill, mais il y a quelques points que la ministre a soulevés qui sont des petits irritants et que j'ai de la difficulté, même dans une journée de fête, à laisser passer.

Quand on parle de meilleur accès et de meilleurs soins en santé pour les francophones, ou même de l'amélioration—si on ne parle pas de la qualité des soins en français, qu'on parle tout simplement de la santé des francophones, je dirais qu'on a encore du chemin à faire. Si on regarde les dernières statistiques, les Franco-Ontariens, on est loin derrière—notre niveau de santé—quand on se compare à la population ontarienne en générale. Je ne suis pas sûre que c'était un choix judicieux de mettre de l'avant.

C'est la même chose lorsque la ministre parle de l'égalité dans le système de la justice comme un travail exemplaire que son gouvernement a fait pour que les systèmes judiciaires soient égaux. Je vous encouragerais de lire certains écrits des Franco-Ontariennes et des Franco-Ontariens qui essayent d'utiliser les tribunaux des droits de la famille et qui ne sont pas capables d'avoir des services en français parce que plusieurs des ces tribunaux-là ne sont pas dans des régions désignées, ce qui veut dire que si tu n'as pas le consentement des deux parties, tu n'auras pas droit au système judiciaire en français. Je ne connais pas grand monde qui ont besoin de se rendre en cour pour un divorce qui sont capables de s'entendre sur quoi que ce soit. Sinon, ils ne seraient pas en cour; ils auraient réglé ça à l'extérieur de la cour. Donc, si tu es rendu là, puis tu dois avoir les deux parties s'entendre sur le français avant d'avoir droit à des services en français, mois, je n'appelle pas ça un travail exemplaire. J'appelle ça qu'il nous reste encore bien du travail à faire face à l'égalité des droits.

Même chose quand on commence à blâmer l'Internet qui est en anglais seulement. La semaine dernière, je parlais au ministre responsable de la taxe de vente harmonisée pour lui dire que ses petits clips sont en anglais seulement. Même chose : la ministre de la Santé vient de sortir des clips sur YouTube qui sont en anglais seulement. On parle ici d'un gouvernement qui a les ressources, le mandat et le devoir de faire les choses de

façon bilingue et qui ne le fait pas. Moi, je dirais que c'est une chance de briller par ton exemple qui vient d'être complètement bafouée.

Les Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes, nous sommes la plus grande communauté francophone hors Québec. Nous aurons très bientôt notre Jour des Franco-Ontariens et des Franco-Ontariennes, reconnu le 25 septembre. Je peux vous assurer que je vais être là, que je vais participer à ces célébrations et que je vais encourager tous les Ontariens, peu importe la langue, à se joindre aux festivités, à reconnaître cette journée et à aider à faire vivre et vibrer la communauté franco-ontarienne aujourd'hui et pour les générations qui s'en viennent.

C'est une belle initiative, un beau geste symbolique, et j'espère que, tout le monde, vous serez présent le 25 septembre de cette année pour le 35^e anniversaire de notre drapeau. J'espère que tout le monde en Ontario va participer aux célébrations du 100^e de notre association francophone de l'Ontario. On célèbre 100 ans cette année de l'ACFO, l'AFO, etc. Elle a changé de nom au cours du dernier siècle.

Donc, je vous encourage, tout le monde. C'est une opportunité de célébration. Il faut prendre le temps de célébrer dans la vie. C'est souvent ce qui est le plus important, et c'est souvent les souvenirs qu'on va chérir le plus dans nos vieux jours.

Il me fait plaisir, au nom du parti néo-démocrate, d'appuyer ce projet de loi.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde: Tout d'abord, c'est avec honneur et fierté que je viens participer à ce projet de loi, qui est de très grande importance pour nous, Ontariens et Ontariennes. Lorsque je dis « très grande importance », je dois tout d'abord remercier et féliciter madame la ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones d'avoir eu l'initiative de présenter ce projet de loi.

Nous savons que sur la planète, nous comptons plus de 200 millions de francophones. Je dis bien que sur la planète, il y a plus de 200 millions de francophones. Au niveau de l'APF, 77 parlements et organisations interparlementaires font partie de l'Assemblée des parlementaires de la Francophonie.

1440

Je viens d'une région qui a beaucoup de francophones. Je dois dire même que dans la région du comté de Prescott, au-delà de 20 % de mes citoyens et citoyennes ne parlent que le français.

Aujourd'hui, nous avons avec nous dans les galeries le concepteur du drapeau franco-ontarien, Gaétan Gervais. On lui souhaite la bienvenue. Merci d'être présent. Je dois dire aussi que j'ai remarqué que dans la galerie, nous avons Denis Hubert-Dutrisac, qui a été honoré mercredi dernier en recevant l'Ordre de la Pléiade de la province de l'Ontario pour son application au niveau de la francophonie ontarienne.

Moi-même, je suis président de la section ontarienne de la francophonie. Je suis aussi chargé de mission des

Amériques. Tout récemment, j'étais en Louisiane pour discuter des sujets de la francophonie.

Aujourd'hui, le fait que nous venons avec un projet de loi pour faire reconnaître vraiment la journée des Franco-Ontariens ici même le 25 septembre—cette année, nous allons célébrer le 35^e anniversaire. Laissez-moi vous dire que lorsque nous avons présenté le projet de loi pour l'emblème de la communauté francophone—le drapeau de la communauté francophone, justement—c'est devenu un outil de marketing. Lorsque je dis un outil de marketing, c'est que beaucoup de gens de l'extérieur de l'Ontario ne savent pas que nous parlons français. J'étais en Louisiane et puis à Montréal tout récemment, il y a une semaine hier justement—dimanche dernier. J'ai rencontré des gens de Paris qui étaient là pour parler de l'avenir d'Haïti. Puis, la première chose qu'ils m'ont dit : « De quel secteur du Québec proviens-tu ? » Le fait que je parlais français—très peu de gens à l'extérieur de l'Ontario savent que nous parlons français.

Je dois dire à ce point-ci que je dois remercier les deux partis de l'opposition. En 2001, lorsque nous avons accepté le drapeau franco-ontarien—le 21 juin 2001—la leader parlementaire du temps, Janet Ecker, qui était ici à ce côté du Parti conservateur, qui était en pouvoir, a demandé cette journée-là d'avoir un drapeau franco-ontarien un peu plus gros que les autres que nous avions dans la Chambre. C'est le ministre aujourd'hui des services publics qui a demandé l'appui unanime afin que tous les membres puissent avoir sur leur bureau le drapeau franco-ontarien.

Tout ça pour vous dire—c'est comme le député de Thornhill vient de le mentionner : nous voyons de plus en plus que nous reconnaissons que les francophones sont une des trois communautés qui ont fondé notre beau pays et aussi fondé notre province. Donc, aujourd'hui on voit qu'on est sensibilisé, qu'il est très important de connaître les francophones et le travail qu'ils ont fait.

Lorsque nous regardons tous le travail qui est fait par les communautés francophones dans ma région—je dirais à Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, incluant Cumberland; je compte au-delà de 80 000 francophones. En suite de ça, en Ontario, nous comptons plus de 600 000 francophones—donc, maintenant, au-delà de 1,2 millions de citoyens et citoyennes de l'Ontario qu'on pourrait considérer francophiles.

Ici même à Toronto, nous voyons qu'ils reconnaissent l'importance de faire connaître notre belle province. Lorsqu'on voit dans nos écoles les cours d'immersion, on manque même de professeurs pour répondre à la demande. Dans notre région, nous avons beaucoup d'écoles francophones et aussi d'écoles anglophones travaillant sur le même niveau. Maintenant, nous partageons ensemble. Nous respectons davantage, aussi, le fait que les francophones étaient des bâtisseurs dans notre belle province.

Oui, en Ontario, nous comptons plus de 600 000 francophones. Je dis bien 600 000 francophones. À Toronto même, plus de 110 000 francophones y sont présents. Puis, nous savons que lorsque vient le temps de

regarder sur le développement économique, que ce soit le développement économique industriel ou le développement économique touristique, il est très important de faire connaître à nos visiteurs ou à nos investisseurs : « Oui, vous pouvez venir vous installer en Ontario. Nous allons nous assurer que vous pouvez continuer à faire affaire dans la langue française. »

Je me rappelle le 1^{er} juillet 2008 lorsque la ministre du Développement économique, Sandra Pupatello, s'est rendue—je m'y suis rendu avec elle—en France afin d'ouvrir un bureau de l'Ontario. Pourquoi sommes-nous allés à Paris pour ouvrir un bureau de l'Ontario? C'est que de plus en plus, nous voyons l'importance de faire affaire avec les pays dont la langue de travail est le français. Puis même, si je regarde—il y a un bureau de la France du développement économique qui est installé à Montréal. Il y a deux semaines, j'étais à une réception ici même à Toronto; ils ont déménagé à Toronto maintenant. Ils sont partis de Montréal et ils ont été amenés à Toronto parce qu'ils reconnaissent maintenant qu'on peut travailler en français ici même à Toronto. Nous avons les écoles en place. Les cours postsecondaires sont en place. Si vous voulez vous rendre au Collège Glendon, vous allez vous apercevoir que même si les personnes ne peuvent pas s'exprimer en français au début, lorsqu'ils vont graduer de ce collège, ils pourront s'exprimer dans les deux langues officielles canadiennes.

Donc, tout ça pour vous dire que ce projet de loi 24 est très important afin de faire connaître à travers le monde entier qu'ici même en Ontario nous sommes ouverts pour les affaires. Nous sommes ouverts—comme on dit en anglais, nous sommes « open for business ». Venez vous installer et vous allez vous apercevoir que vous allez pouvoir travailler dans les deux langues et puis, de plus en plus, travailler, faire l'exportation ou attirer des investisseurs des pays francophones. Donc, c'est un outil de marketing qu'on a sorti auparavant, avec le beau drapeau que le concepteur, Gaétan Gervais, a mis à notre disposition.

On a accepté à l'unanimité dans cette Chambre que le drapeau franco-ontarien soit reconnu comme un emblème officiel de la province aujourd'hui grâce à madame la ministre qui, vraiment, avec son initiative d'arriver et de nous présenter un projet de loi qui va rendre tous les Ontariens et les Ontariennes très fiers de cette position—qu'on soit unilingue anglophone ou unilingue francophone, on reconnaît maintenant l'importance de pouvoir faire affaire dans les deux langues. Quand je dis les deux langues : les deux langues officielles. On sait que de plus en plus, il y a l'espagnol qu'on essaie de développer davantage. Mais, encore une fois, le français est une langue qui devient de plus en plus importante pour les gens d'affaires.

J'étais aux Nations Unies le 22 janvier dernier. À ma grande surprise, la langue numéro un aux Nations Unies aux bureaux de New York est le français, qui prime sur les autres langues. Donc, c'est pour vous démontrer l'importance. Ensuite, nous avons une réception. À la grande surprise encore, on nous a annoncé que 1 800

personnes dans la ville de New York suivent des cours en français maintenant, parce qu'on regarde la langue à la grandeur mondiale lorsque vient le temps de faire affaire avec les entreprises des industries. Donc, la langue française est très importante.

Je dois le dire encore : merci à notre ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones, afin de pouvoir aller de l'avant avec un projet de loi. Vous vous êtes certainement aperçus qu'on n'a pas été obligé de faire du « lobbying » pour le faire passer. C'est que l'opposition, que ce soit—

Interjections.

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde: —M^{me} Gélinas; excusez-moi. C'est parce que je commence à manquer ma voix avec ma grippe.

Donc, c'est pour vous montrer l'importance que vous jouez au niveau gouvernemental à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario afin de faire connaître davantage notre belle langue, le français.

Donc, à vous tous, chers amis de l'opposition, merci. Rarement nous avons vu—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Further debate?

M. Garfield Dunlop: J'ai l'honneur d'être parmi vous cet après-midi pour vous parler de la loi 24, la Loi sur le Jour des Franco-Ontariens et des Franco-Ontariennes. Je voudrais premièrement remercier ma collègue l'honorable M^{me} Meilleur pour l'introduction de cette loi. J'aimerais également remercier tous les membres de la Chambre pour avoir appuyé la Loi 24, et j'espère qu'elle sera adoptée pour la 25 septembre, qui sera proclamé le Jour des Franco-Ontariens et des Franco-Ontariennes.

1450

En dernier lieu, j'aimerais remercier M^{me} Deborah Ann Glavic, qui m'a aidé à préparer ce discours.

Je voulais vous parler principalement de cette loi aujourd'hui car il y a de fortes racines francophones dans ma région du nord de Simcoe. Nous sommes privilégiés dans la région du Simcoe-Nord. Nous avons des communautés comme Penetanguishene et Lafontaine qui ont maintenu une forte présence francophone jusqu'à ce jour.

Tout récemment, le 16 avril de cette année, j'ai participé à l'annonce de financement Trillium pour la mise en oeuvre d'un jardin communautaire chez Le Villageois de Lafontaine. Ceci est un nouvel établissement pour les personnes âgées qui sont, en majorité, francophones.

Nous dédions également une fin de semaine entière au mois de juillet pour célébrer le Festival du Loup. Ce festival célèbre la culture et l'héritage de cette communauté francophone, mettant en valeur la musique, l'art et l'histoire. Ce festival est fréquenté par des personnes de diverses origines.

Je veux prendre quelques moments pour souligner deux personnages historiques importants. Le personnage francophone le plus reconnu est le célèbre explorateur Samuel de Champlain. Nous avons un monument et une école élémentaire française, à Orillia, qui portent son nom en mémoire de lui. Il est arrivé en 1615 dans la

région que nous appelons aujourd'hui Huronie. Ce qui nous n'est pas tous familier est le fait que cinq ans auparavant, soit en 1610, il avait envoyé M. Étienne Brûlé pour vivre parmi les Huron afin de mieux se familiariser et de découvrir davantage leur milieu. Alors, il est important de noter que la proclamation du Jour des Franco-Ontariens et des Franco-Ontariennes coïncide aussi avec le 400^e anniversaire de l'arrivée d'Étienne Brûlé en Ontario.

Je veux aussi vous mentionner que la première messe catholique a été célébrée dans la colonie de Carhagouha, qui, de nos jours, est située à l'ouest de la ville de Québec. Cette messe a été célébrée par le père Le Caron. Samuel de Champlain et Étienne Brûlé ont été présents lors de cette messe. Dans la ville de Penetanguishene, nous avons une école secondaire française nommée en l'honneur du père Le Caron.

Comme nous approchons l'année 2015, ce sera le 400^e anniversaire de l'arrivée de Samuel de Champlain en Ontario. Dans la région du Simcoe-Nord, nous nous sommes déterminés à souligner cette occasion spéciale. Nous nous attendons à ce que les gouvernements provincial et fédéral accordent une attention spéciale envers ce personnage francophone si extraordinaire.

En conclusion, je suis très heureux de voir que cette législature reconnaît l'importance de nos francophones en Ontario, leur histoire et héritage si enrichissants, ainsi que les opportunités qu'ils représenteront à l'avenir. De la part des résidents de la région de Simcoe-Nord, j'applaudis la proclamation de la Loi 24, loi de 2010 votée par le parlement sur le Jour des Franco-Ontariens et des Franco-Ontariens.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

M. Ted Arnott: Je tiens à l'honneur de parler en faveur du projet de loi 24, Loi proclamant le Jour des Franco-Ontariens et des Franco-Ontariennes.

Si ce projet de loi est adopté par l'Assemblée législative, le 25 septembre de chaque année, nous reconnaitrons l'importance de la présence francophone en Ontario et nous rendrons hommage aux accomplissements et aux contributions de nos résidents et résidentes francophones.

Quoique aujourd'hui j'offre mes commentaires en français, j'aimerais bien avoir cette aisance dans les deux langues. J'ai écrit ces commentaires en anglais sur mon BlackBerry, une autre merveilleuse tradition canadienne, mais j'avais besoin d'aide pour les traduire en français.

Améliorer ma fluidité en français a toujours été l'un de mes objectifs, mais trouver le temps pour réaliser cet objectif est un gros défi depuis mon élection à l'Assemblée législative en 1990.

Je suis tout de même fier de dire que j'ai étudié le français à l'école secondaire et à l'université. J'ai également participé au programme de cours immersif en français à l'Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières en 1987.

Par surcroît, mon épouse est une professeure de français et nos fils font partie du programme de cours

immersif en français offert par notre système d'écoles publiques à Fergus.

Notre famille croit en la valeur du bilinguisme. Nous adoptons cette valeur parce que nous sommes des Canadiens.

Le Canada que nous connaissons, aimons et tenons à cœur ne serait pas ce qu'il est aujourd'hui si ce n'était pas de la communauté francophone qui forme le centre de notre histoire partagée. Le Canada ne serait pas le Canada sans la culture et la langue françaises.

Cette année marque le 400^e anniversaire de l'arrivée des pionniers francophones, lorsque Étienne Brûlé est arrivé d'une mission de reconnaissance pour Samuel de Champlain.

Aujourd'hui, il y a près de 600 000 francophones en Ontario, la plus importante communauté francophone hors Québec.

Aujourd'hui nous leur rendons hommage, nous les remercions pour leurs contributions variées à l'Ontario, et nous célébrons ce qui fait de nous, les Canadiens et les Canadiennes, une communauté spéciale.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

M^{me} Lisa MacLeod: Mes collègues, il me fait plaisir de parler du projet de loi 24, une loi pour déclarer le 25 septembre le Jour des Franco-Ontariens et des Franco-Ontariennes.

Il est vrai de dire que ce projet de loi aujourd'hui sert à raconter l'histoire du drapeau franco-ontarien, qui a débuté pendant le mandat progressiste-conservateur il y a 35 ans. C'était le 25 septembre 1975 quand le drapeau francophone vert et blanc a été levé pour la première fois. Je veux prendre l'occasion pour souligner plusieurs de mes collègues qui ont aidé à nous livrer à ce moment. Je me souviens d'une gamme de députés qui ont assisté à ce côté de la Chambre. Je parle ici de Gilles Morin, Leo Bernier, René Brunelle, et surtout Albert Bélanger et Brian Coburn de ma communauté, celle d'Ottawa.

I am thinking on this occasion to underscore numerous PC colleagues who have throughout the years contributed to where we are today. I'm thinking here of Leo Bernier, René Brunelle; of course, from Ottawa, Albert Bélanger, Brian Coburn; and from the minister of francophone affairs' own riding, Jules Morin of Ottawa-Vanier.

1500

I'm fortunate to call Ottawa my home, a city where many cultures and both official languages thrive in my riding of Nepean-Carleton. We are fortunate to have many French-language schools. I will name them: École élémentaire publique Michaëlle-Jean, École élémentaire Bernard-Grandmaître, École élémentaire catholique Jean-Robert Gauthier, École élémentaire catholique Pierre-Elliott-Trudeau, École secondaire catholique de Barrhaven, and Collège catholique Franco-Ouest. These schools enrich our community and help build Canadian culture.

I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate Gerald R. Savoie from Manotick, who was awarded the ordre de la Pléiade for his contributions to

the Franco-Ontarian community. I want to congratulate Gerald for his exceptional merits in receiving this distinguished honour. He has made Nepean–Carleton and the entire city of Ottawa very proud.

I'd like to congratulate all of my colleagues in the chamber today, regardless of political affiliation. I think taking a stand today with my colleagues from Thornhill, Simcoe North and Wellington–Halton Hills, as well as members across the chamber, is a strong stand for diversity in this chamber and for Ontario.

I'd also like to commend my colleague from the city of Ottawa, Jean-Marc Lalonde from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, who has been quite an advocate on all matters of culture. Whether it is Franco-Ontarian Day, the Franco-Ontarian flag or even recently when we celebrated the Olympics in this nation in Vancouver, he has tremendous spirit. I would like to congratulate him.

Madam Speaker, I would like to say thank you so much for the opportunity to speak to this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

There being no further debate, Madame Meilleur has moved second reading of Bill 24. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

FRANCO-ONTARIAN DAY ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LE JOUR DES FRANCO-ONTARIENS ET DES FRANCO-ONTARIENNES

M^{me} Meilleur moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 24, An Act to proclaim Franco-Ontarian Day /
Projet de loi 24, Loi proclamant le Jour des Franco-
Ontariens et des Franco-Ontariennes.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Third reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

FULL DAY EARLY LEARNING STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE L'APPRENTISSAGE DES JEUNES ENFANTS À TEMPS PLEIN

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 21, 2010, on the motion for third reading of Bill 242, An Act to amend the Education Act and certain other Acts in relation to early childhood educators, junior kindergarten and kindergarten, extended day programs and certain other matters / Projet de loi 242, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation et d'autres lois en ce qui concerne les éducateurs de la petite enfance, la maternelle et le jardin

d'enfants, les programmes de jour prolongé et d'autres questions.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm happy to continue with the debate I left off with, I think, last Thursday. I believe I still have approximately 20 minutes or so, as the clock shows.

Last Thursday, I was talking about an individual whom I thought encapsulated Bill 242 very well. His name was Petr Varmuza, a former city employee who worked in the field of child care for a long, long time. I thought he brought a great deal of wisdom to the depositions on Bill 242. He talked about the three Rs: Is it the right thing to do? Are we doing it right? Are we providing the right resources to it to make sure this bill is done well?

I talked about "Is it the right thing to do?" last week, so I'd rather not re-engage viewers with the first R. I talked as well about "Are we doing it right?" I raised many questions to which I spoke, and I will continue with that, and the third, and parts of "Are we committing the right resources?"—those two I combined in my remarks, and I will end my remarks by reviewing many of the amendments I made that the government rejected.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: For the record, the member from Oakville wasn't there; you're quite right. But the government rejected all of my amendments, and I want to review them one by one toward the latter part of my discussion.

I began to say last week that consideration must be given to the potential loss of revenue for daycares, which may put them at risk or drive up costs for parents whose children remain in daycares. I thought I talked about it last week; I'm not quite sure. But it doesn't matter. If I did so, I'll repeat it; that is, many of the child care centres that provide preschool and after-school activities rely on those dollars.

Those daycare centres that provide child care for four- and five-year-olds rely on a steady flow of dollars to be able to stay open. Once you remove those students from those child care centres, it's going to cost them a great deal by way of financial support, which they were desperately looking for. We believe that unless we support them in this transition as we obligate the boards of education to provide preschool and after-school care with full-time JK and SK in a seamless day, we need to provide the support to those daycare centres, for the most part non-profits and others, that are currently providing that support.

I have to admit that there wasn't a great deal of clarity in committee. As we were speaking on this matter, the member from Kitchener–Conestoga gave answers that I thought left me more befuddled at the end than indeed in between and before we even spoke on this matter. I was saying, "Will you be providing transitional dollars for those child care centres—stabilization funds or indeed even base funding?" The parliamentary assistant from

Kitchener-Conestoga said that the minister announced \$63 million already, and that was supposed to be used for transitional funding.

I pressed the member and said, "That money, as far as I know, is supposed to be a continuation of federal dollars that have been dispersed over the last four years"—\$63 million for the last four years. What the government has done is finally put in some of their own money by committing \$63 million for the following year. God knows whether that money will continue to flow year after year; we don't know. We have been pressing Liberals to talk about the \$300 million they wanted to spend since 2003, and as far as I know, they've only been spending approximately \$25 million to \$30 million of the money they promised—their own provincial dollars—as opposed to what the federal government has done, which they took and distributed over a four-year period.

So I said to the member from Kitchener-Conestoga, "I'm sorry, but as far as I know, that \$63 million has nothing to do with Bill 242." A couple of minutes later, she received a note, from what I could gather, and then she said there's going to be some extra money. I tried to clarify that, but by the end of the answer I was more confused than before I asked the question. So it wasn't entirely clear.

I made some inquiries with child care folks outside Queen's Park. They said, "We don't get any help from the government in this regard." I suppose if I talked to the minister, she might reveal some of those things; I don't know. But I was told through some outside person that the government is indeed announcing privately some additional money other than the \$63 million for stabilization funds. We heard a figure of \$50 million, which would go a long way to help those non-profit sectors that will be seriously affected by it.

But if indeed they're providing that kind of money, say it out loud. Tell opposition member Marchese that there's \$50 million coming. Why hide it? Why not tell me publicly that you're doing that? Then I can call the folks who are calling me and say, "Don't worry, the minister and others have told me privately and publicly that there is money coming. Not to worry." But they don't say.

What the outside folks also say—we hear that the \$50-million figure they told them may be a diminishing number; that is, they said \$50 million, but clearly that number fluctuates, which suggests to me the government is not entirely committed and/or clear about how much money they're going to give to this sector that is going to be profoundly affected by Bill 242. And because the minister and others haven't told me whether they're going to give it any money, my feeling is that I don't know whether there's any money that is going to come from the government.

1510

We're not going to know until September, and even then it will be vague, it will be hit-and-miss. Some communities may get some support, others may not. We don't have a clue. I say to the minister, who is present in

this Legislature, "If you know, tell us," so that we can have clarity—not to talk about accountability, but at least clarity—so that those who are worried can be relieved of the financial stress they know they're going to experience come September. I put that on the record as well, because I am concerned.

How will this affect the boards that already have full-day kindergarten, like most of the French boards in the province? I asked that question today in the Legislature, along with my colleague France Gélinas, because—and I'll get to the amendment later, because we have time—we were very concerned.

We stated French-language boards play a unique role in this province and we, as New Democrats, support the uniqueness of French-language boards, French language, French-language culture in Ontario, and we need to do whatever we need to do, constitutionally and by law, to make sure that they are getting the support they need, to make sure that they have been adequately and fully consulted so that they, together with the government, are able to answer many of the questions that they have, that they submitted to us both in writing and orally; their worries about how Bill 242 is going to affect them in particular, their culture, their language, their students, their programs.

When I raised this in committee there was not but a word. The member from Kitchener-Conestoga, the parliamentary assistant, said not but a word, which leads me to believe that those who came to depute have legitimate worries.

Now I know the government is going to hide under subsection 260.8(1) which reads, "The Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations respecting transitional matters related to the implementation of this part." and (2), "In the event of a conflict, a regulation made under subsection (1) prevails over provisions of an act or regulation that are administered by the minister."

What this section did for the government is to avoid answering any questions in committee, to avoid accepting any of the amendments that I proposed, and simply to say "Don't worry, Marchese. Don't worry, French language boards, you're going to be taken care of in regulation." It all seems nice, even cute, to suggest that we got it covered; that Marchese has proposed an amendment to deal with that and the government says, "We've got another amendment to deal with this. We're not going to talk about it. We're just going to present a motion in the bill that says a regulation will be passed and that will override anything contained in the bill or anything else for that matter."

Understand the vagueness of that section. Understand that, through regulation, where we have absolutely no control, the government can quietly, secretly do whatever it wants with the French boards or with any other non-profit child care centre here, in Ottawa, in the north, in the east, whatever, where there will be no uniform application of the law, but rather hit-and-miss on the basis of whatever regulation is passed by the government

to deal with whatever problem they're facing anywhere in Ontario.

This regulation means there will be no uniformity of application. They can do what they want. I suppose it is a response. It wasn't the response I was looking for, but I know that French-language boards have submitted to us and to the government their serious concern by way of a six- or seven-page letter that has been sent to them saying, "We've got concerns; you've got to deal with them." My hope is that they will. My hope is that they will consult after the fact and resolve as many problems as have been raised.

We argue that there must be subsidies for before- and after-school care to ensure accessibility. If we do not offer subsidies for the preschool and after-school, it means a lot of those young children are not going to be able to go to that full-day JK and SK. If indeed the cost of that preschool and after-school—\$30 a day can be very expensive for a whole lot of people. So we are worried about that. We do not have any information as to how the government proposes to deal with that, but if the price is too high we're going to be shutting out a whole lot of parents. We assume there is going to be a subsidy program, and we hope the details of that subsidy will soon be revealed so that many can be relieved of this problem before the start of the next year in early September.

Without guaranteed before- and after-school care, this is not really full-day anything. Parents who cannot find or afford before-9 and after-3 care may not be able to access the extra half-day of kindergarten for their child. For learning to be full-day, it must include guaranteed full wraparound service at one location. There is nothing in this legislation to provide full-year care for the summer, Christmas or March break periods.

We worry that in the summer, when school is over, children are going to be on their own, parents will be on their own, desperately looking for care. So while you have a seamless day for 10 months of the year, for the next two months parents are on their own having to struggle to find child care—including March break, Christmas break and other days.

By the way, in my amendment to say there should be full, year-round schooling for these children—and by "schooling," I mean those preschool and after-school child care programs. We believe these programs are desperately needed by working men and women. While it is true that the government provides for boards that are willing to provide such a program in the summer, there is actually nothing in law that says they must. It is voluntary, and because it is voluntary, no board without adequate support and no board that's facing ongoing deficits is ever going to provide a program for the summer for those kids. You're never going to have a year-round program, as we propose. Unless you obligate boards to do so, they will not do it. Because it's voluntary, and because most boards are broke and have been so for a long time and have been experiencing deficits for a long time—and by the way, they are able to deal with their

deficits by cutting programs. I suggest to you that it means they have no money to provide those programs.

Boards like the Toronto District School Board have already expressed concern about whether or not the funding being provided by the government is adequate. And it's not just the Toronto board. Most boards across Ontario are profoundly worried that they're going to have to take money from the current budgets to provide for this program. I guarantee that the extra administrative costs and the extra time the teachers, vice-principals and principals are going to have to put into this program mean that much of what they do now will have to simply be deferred, will have to wait. There is an incredible cost, both financial and in time, to teachers, vice-principals, principals, superintendents and everybody else to make sure this program works and works well. It suggests to me that they're going to be very busy trying to make this work, and it says to me that much of what they've been doing will simply not be done.

I want to get to my amendments because people need to know the amendments that I have moved. I want to remind people that the government did not accept any one of my amendments or any of the amendments that were introduced by Ms. Witmer, the member of the Conservative Party, with respect to this particular issue, and I want to read them for the record.

1520

Amendment 1: The government must develop a five-year plan to implement the entire Pascal report by 2015.

We reminded the member from Kitchener-Conestoga that Charles Pascal—and I'm looking for the page that tells us what Pascal had recommended. And I said "five years" and I remember the member from Kitchener-Conestoga saying, "Here's the report. He didn't say five years. He said up until 2020, so it's another 20 years"—no. Much of what Pascal had recommended would be done in five. And in the first three years, as I indicated to her in committee, they should have done the following:

- provide the full-day early learning program for all of Ontario's four- and five-year-olds, including extended day/year options for parents;

- vest accountability for system change in an early years division in the Ministry of Education;

- create an early years policy framework for a coherent, comprehensive and accountable child and family service system;

- improve parent engagement;

- mandate municipal authorities to consolidate and re-engineer child/family programs and child care for children up to age four into the Best Start child and family centres; and

- allocate sufficient funding to support the strategy.

Understand: In three years, they requested the Minister of Education to do all the things that I read in that report. The bulk of it was supposed to be done in three years. Then there's more in the next two years.

But if you were there—some of you were there—she dangled this paper before us, saying, "No, the report said 2020." It's not true. Whatever was to be done by 2020

included the following in years 5 to 10: expand parental leave, and make available a new early childhood specialty degree. That's what we were supposed to do in five years, which she dangled in front of my eyes.

We hope that the government is committed to the Pascal report and we hope they will do this in five years. They rejected that.

I put it forth because I truly believe in it; I think Pascal strongly believed in it; teachers believed in it; and everybody who was consulted believed in it.

Amendment 2—folks, you guys are—it's a bit annoying, because I'm trying to read and there's chatter here. If you don't mind, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: We were complimenting you.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I know, but it's just the chatter that hurts.

Amendment 2: In order to deliver a planned and effective curriculum and support the principle of seamless early childhood education throughout the complete full and extended day period, each class will be staffed by two designated early childhood educator positions and one teacher position.

The early childhood education positions must be full-time and based on a seven-hour day.

The two ECE positions must overlap to enable the provision of 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. coverage, including the availability of both ECEs to cover the lunch-hour period.

This is not going to work very well. We're proposing two early childhood educators, because you can't do this with one teacher and one early childhood educator. The minister knows this, and they're going to have to scramble to find parents, grandparents, anybody who's going to come in and try to fill in the preschool and after-school, including lunch hour. It's not going to work, and it's not going to work well. And they rejected my amendment.

Third one: A board will be allowed to employ workers on a letter of permission where no ECE is available. If a worker on a letter of permission applies for a second letter, a training program must be provided to facilitate qualifying as an ECE.

Many deputations came forward saying, "Look, a letter of permission is okay but it should be limited, and maximum two years." Some of the people who apply simply are not qualified, so to extend it indefinitely is wrong. The government rejected this amendment.

Amendment 4: The government must set up a process to compensate child care centres for financial losses due to the impact of the shift of four- and five-year-olds to the public school system over the next five years. They rejected that, as I indicated in my remarks.

Amendment 5: Class sizes in the kindergarten early learning program must be capped at 26 students. They rejected that. It means that class size is likely to go up to 30. We believe having four- and five-year-olds in a classroom that's not adequate—up to 30 students is going to be tough on the teacher and tough on the early childhood educator.

Amendment 6: School boards must be mandated and funded to provide a nutritious lunch and snacks to all children in the full-day learning program. They rejected that as well.

Amendment 7: School boards must be mandated and funded to provide full-day and full-year care for every child registered in the full-day learning program. They rejected that.

Amendment 8: In order to protect the space in our schools currently occupied by child care programs, the government must provide capital funding to provide space for the early learning program that will not result in the loss of viable child care spaces.

Amendment 9: This would provide an exemption for French-language district school boards until a date set out in a plan developed under this legislation. The minister would develop a transitional plan for the implementation of this legislation that recognizes the unique nature of French language schools and respects the long-standing kindergarten programs that are already in place.

These are all my amendments, all rejected by the government.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to follow the member from Trinity-Spadina. As usual, he brings a lot to the debate. I know that in the opportunities that I've had to work with him at the committee level, some of his input has been quite valuable, and we've tried to work together. Where the member for Trinity-Spadina, Mr. Marchese, brings forward an idea that falls in line with the direction of the government, we've tried to give credit where credit is due. In a number of cases, we've been successful in that.

This is a program that is very, very popular with parents. It's obviously a change in our school system and it's a major change in our school system. It's something that's being introduced, I think, in a transitional way to allow the school boards to learn, as they're doing, to bring into a number of schools about 35,000 four- and five-year-olds. Fourteen hundred classes in about 600 schools around the province are going to benefit from what we're calling the first phase of full-day learning, and that's starting this September. After that, stages will follow; stages will be phased in. The intent is to have it fully phased in by 2015-16.

I think the approach that is being taken—and some of the ideas, to be frank, that were put forward by the member from Trinity-Spadina have a lot of merit. It's a matter of the process you use to deal with them, then. What we're saying is that the concerns that were raised by some of the stakeholders—very valid concerns, very valuable input—can be dealt with through the introduction of regulations to deal with this as we move forward.

This obviously will be a process that changes along the way. As we learn more, as we get more input from groups, as the experience makes itself known, we're going to get better and better at this.

I thank the member for his remarks. I understand his sentiments—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you.

The member from Dufferin—Caledon.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It's a pleasure to comment on the member from Trinity—Spadina's final lead on Bill 242. I think he was kind when he said that there wasn't a great deal of clarity while we were working on clause-by-clause in committee. The words "Trust us; it will be in regulation" came up almost without exception every time a question was raised of the parliamentary assistant, and quite frankly, it got a little disconcerting. We were looking for very specific responses, and instead, the answer was always, "It will be in regulation. It will be okay. Trust us." I think, quite frankly, the people who presented over the three days of hearings deserved a more concrete response. I also believe the opposition members deserved a little more than, "Trust us; it will be in regulation."

I've spoken previously in this House about my concern with how much detail is left to regulation, how easily regulations can be changed with the stroke of a pen, without consultation, so I do have concerns that there are many unintended consequences that are going to happen with the implementation of Bill 242. The member from Trinity—Spadina raised a number of them in his amendments and in his questions to the parliamentary assistant. I think it's very unfortunate that we were essentially brushed aside and told, "No, no, don't worry. It will all be in regulation. It will all be good." I think it's a terrible way to deal with legislation that, as the previous speaker said, is quite a dramatic change in how education is going to be dealt with in Ontario.

1530

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments.

M^{me} France Gélinas: It's always a pleasure to make comments following the member from Trinity—Spadina. He brought a lot of factual information to this debate. One can't help but think: How can something good—the implementation of full-day kindergarten and junior kindergarten—go so wrong? Well, it goes so wrong when there is no transparency, when there is no opportunity for people to be heard.

Do we want full-day kindergarten? Absolutely. Do we support full-day learning? Absolutely. Do we have questions? The member from Trinity—Spadina certainly spelled out some questions that the people in the field, the people who are tasked with implementing this in very short order—we're talking how, in a number of weeks from now, those little four-year-olds are going to be participating in full-day learning in Ontario. The people who are going to be delivering those services have legitimate questions, and we all get brushed aside.

To say that it will be handled in regulation is, in my point of view, disrespectful—disrespectful of what we're trying to achieve and disrespectful of the goodwill of the people who want to make this a success on the ground

but who need answers from this government in order for this to happen. We get told it is going to be handled in regulation. Regulation is not a transparent process. It's not a process that gets debated in a public place. It's certainly not a process that we in opposition have any way, shape or form of influencing. With such an important issue, it is hard to comprehend why good people are being brushed aside.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments.

Mr. Jim Brownell: I'm pleased to have a couple of minutes this afternoon to speak on Bill 242, full-day learning, and to say, as a retired educator—I spent almost 33 years in an elementary school classroom—that I certainly have the knowledge and understanding of what it means, the importance of having four- and five-year-olds in the classroom, in kindergarten, in full-day learning. We've taken the bull by the horns with this and have decided on a program that will see up to 35,000 four- and five-year-olds in 1,400 classes in 600 schools in Ontario in September of this year.

This will be expanded. This will happen in stages across Ontario. We will certainly learn from this process as we go. I'm sure, long after we're gone from the Legislature, there will be other ideas that will be taken into consideration as we receive more knowledge about this.

Certainly we've learned a lot from Dr. Pascal and the understanding that he has of the importance of early learning and the way it's to be implemented. We would like to do everything in every program across Ontario, but we just can't do that. I can say that this is giving the youngsters that opportunity to move between programs and locations without having to move from one school to another, or from one learning experience to another. That's what I like about it: It's giving the young people that opportunity to have that full experience of learning when they are so vibrant in doing so.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Trinity—Spadina has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I just want to say to the member from Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry that we do not question whether it's the right thing to do. We went beyond that debate. So to repeat that fact that this is a nice program, this is a good program, is irrelevant in the scheme of this debate, at least with us. The question is, are we doing it right? That is the question that I have been debating Thursday and today. It is my view that we're not doing it well. The reason why we're not doing this well is because we have not accepted to do all of what Pascal told the Liberal government to do. Had they done what Pascal told them to do, we wouldn't have all of these questions. We wouldn't be in a situation where everyone is worried about what is going to happen come September or the next September or beyond. Because they cherry-picked two of the elements of that full Pascal report, we are left with profound questions and worries.

When the government attempts to deal with this—and with all due respect to my friend from Oakville, we have worked together on a number of other bills and he himself has made an effort to make amendments, and he has worked on amendments on this bill—there was no effort whatsoever. On this bill, the government passed a motion that said, “The Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations respecting transitional matters....” These transitional matters are presumably going to be five or six years, so we’re not going to have any clarity for five or six years over any transitional matter that may pertain to this bill. So anything goes, nothing goes; there will be no uniformity, or maybe there will be. We might deal with the French-language school boards; we may not—adequately or not. Other matters—we don’t have a clue. So to deal with this process question this way is not right. That’s my point.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I’m pleased to rise and talk about third reading of Bill 242. I had the pleasure of sitting in on clause-by-clause debate and listening to the deputations over three days of hearings. There were a number of issues that were raised. Quite frankly, I don’t think they were dealt with when we got to the amendments and the clause-by-clause, so I’d like to focus my debate on that.

The first one, which is right up at the top in terms of what we’ll call unintended consequences of implementing full-day learning, is the concern that the bill will not allow school boards to partner with local, private and not-for-profit providers to offer the before- and after-care program for either before-and-after care, for summer, and for non-school days. Those would be the PD days, March break, the Christmas break. The YMCA had concerns that the current model that they have operated with for the last 50-odd years will in fact be eliminated if they are not allowed to continue those partnerships within existing school boards. As I said, this was also a concern of the Ontario school boards’ association, Dufferin-Peel PLASP and the YMCAs.

I’m going to give you a bit of an overview from an excerpt that was given by the Ontario Public School Boards’ Association. An example of this partnership “can be seen with Peel District School Board and Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board. Both have a working relationship with several organizations including PLASP—formerly known as the Peel lunch and after-school program—Family Day and the YMCA. PLASP Child Care Services is a not-for-profit organization with fairly sophisticated financial and fee collection systems, including a call centre. It has been involved with both school boards for over 20 years”—in Peel—“and provides programs for children up to 12 years of age that include before-school, lunch-hour and after-school care as well as PA/PD days, Christmas and March break holidays. These relationships have developed into school-based partnerships that provide seamless transitions and services for children and their families. These child care

providers are part of the collaborative fabric that make up the Peel region’s Success by 6 and Peel child and youth initiatives.”

What I see happening with Bill 242 is in fact going to eliminate that partnership. I think it’s a terrible shame that partnerships that have been built up over years and years and are, quite frankly, a community responding to the needs within their community—that this bill will eliminate those partnerships and availability to allow before- and after-day programs.

The YMCA wanted a clear role for not-for-profit community providers delivering after-school programs for the six- to 12-year-olds. To some degree, I think they were successful in getting that clarification of the six-to-12-year-olds.

1540

My concern is what is happening with the younger children. Full-day learning, of course, will allow children as young as three years and eight months old to be in a full-day program. Where is there availability for before-and-after programs for PD days, March break and Christmas break? I’m a mother of two young children, and I know the challenge of finding care for those one-off days. Quite frankly, it’s a lot simpler when you’re looking for full-day care than if you’re trying to fill in the spots here and there throughout the year.

I do have concerns about the viability of non-school-based child care providers as well—operators who say that the four- and five-year-olds have actually helped subsidize the cost of the younger children. We have a model in place in Ontario that I would argue has been working, where a set number of children have to have an ECE provider with them. That number of children changes as the children age, and when you eliminate the four- and five-year-olds in that business model, it makes the business case for operating a child care program that effectively ends at three- and four-year-olds very challenging from a business standpoint.

Almost every child care organization that presented before the committee shared the same concerns, and I think that’s very unusual. I’ve sat on a number of different committees now, and it’s sort of sending a message when deputation after deputation is raising the same concerns, raising the same issues. We saw that very clearly with Bill 242. There were a lot of presentations that began: “We support the option of allowing children to participate in full-day learning, but we have concerns with how it is going to be implemented under this bill.” Then, to give them credit, many of the presenters gave specific examples of how Bill 242 could have been improved and could have actually worked within the current system.

The YMCA fears that parents will be forced to use unlicensed, unregulated, informal child care arrangements. That comes back to: If I’m only looking for care for PD days, March break and Christmas, it’s not a sound business model for a provider—a business person—to set up a model where they’re not going to get the children full-time. There is no business in Ontario that will say,

"If I can only have clients for two and a half weeks in any given school year, I can make a sound business case for that." We heard a number of providers referencing that.

Despite the fact that we had three days of hearings, there were no substantive amendments made to reflect the input that was received from so many of the presenters. It sends a message to the presenters as well that we're going through the process but we've really already made up our minds, and even though you're in the system and working within the school boards and within the schools, we're really not interested in hearing from you how to improve our model under 242.

We don't know how quickly different boards and schools are going to be able to offer the program. A lot of parents are going to be deprived of the opportunity, depending on how Bill 242 is spun out, of whether they can make plans and how to make those plans. We now know in our own community which schools will be providing full-day learning, many without, and many will not be able to provide that care. Many schools are not being given that option. So again, there's that unknown: Depending on where you live, depending on which neighbourhood you're in, you will have full-day learning, and for many, of course, you will not.

The sheer cost of implementing this program: I think we've had the government back down a little, quite frankly, and slow down on implementation, because they're starting to look at the bottom line in terms much how much this one program is going to cost the provincial coffers. It would not surprise me in the least to find that even the implementation of five years will be slowed down more as we look at just how challenging wrestling this deficit is going to be.

As the community and social services critic, it's frustrating to me that we have so many programs existing in Ontario now that previous governments and this government have held up as something that they really want to offer to the people of Ontario, and yet they won't fund them effectively. I'm thinking, of course, of the children's aid societies currently, or community development. We have hundreds of families who are looking for services for their children who have aged out of the school system, and they are not getting access to services at home, to Passport programs. I see a brand new program being started, and I just have to question, if you can't sufficiently fund the programs that we have now, then why are you starting to begin some new programs? You have to have your fiscal house in order before you're going to get to new programs like full-day learning.

Back to special needs children: Are there going to be services in place for those kids? The Early Years program that was put in place has done a very effective job of capturing children who need that early speech and language assistance. I'm worried that by starting a new program, by getting a new one up and running, we're going to lose some of those kids in terms of getting the assessment that they need.

As I raised in my comments in response to the member from Trinity-Spadina, much of this legislation is being left to regulation—too much, in my opinion. I think that the providers and the school boards deserve clear, concise instructions as to what they can expect, and I want to give you one example that highlights the need for that clarity.

There was a memo that was sent out to directors of education across the province on January 13 of this year. It was sent by Jim Grieve, who is the assistant deputy minister in the early learning division; a very talented staff member, formerly with the Peel board of education. He has been charged with implementing the Early Years program, so he sent out a memo to all the directors of education, and he was trying to clarify some of the proposals that were in Bill 242. I'll highlight only one section that obviously raised a number of phone calls and a number of questions to me. It's talking about governing legislation and program documents.

It says, "The ministry is also developing a program guide outlining how the extended day program would complement the core day program." So of course, the extended day program would be any child who taps into the before- and after-school program: the 6:30 or 7 a.m. until 9 a.m., and then 3 p.m. onwards after the formal school day ends.

It says, "Additional material will be developed for parents to use at home, should they choose not to enrol their children in the extended day." So we're talking about homework programs that are going to be provided by the Ministry of Education for children who are not tapped into the before-school and after-school programs. I'm looking at that, thinking, "Okay, I have a child in grade 2. I have a child in grade 5. I remember shaking my head when they were bringing homework home in kindergarten, and now we're talking about JK?" And again, this quote comes from a January 13 memo from the ADM for the Early Years division of the Ministry of Education.

As an additional point, I raised this with the minister's parliamentary assistant in committee because I felt I had an obligation, because it had been raised with me as a point of concern, that perhaps I could get clarification at that time. And in fact, the parliamentary assistant first shook her head and said, no, no, I must be misquoting. Then, of course, when I provided the memo, there was an, "I'll get back to you." I'm still waiting for that answer. I would like clarification on that, and I understand the minister is here, and perhaps we could get that clarification, because I think it's important for the clarity of this debate to know what exactly is meant by, "If you do not participate or sign your child up for the before- and after-day program, in fact, you will be sent home with homework for them."

1550

The Ontario Principals' Council also appeared at committee. As has been raised by a number of people, they are concerned about the September rollout. There still are many unknowns. We have almost no information as to

how this full-day learning program is going to be implemented in schools throughout Ontario, but parents have to enrol their children now in order to sign up for the September date.

I think that's a really unfortunate way to deal with parents who need that clarity. We often talk about the need to simplify the lives of working parents in Ontario. Having those unknowns with this full-day learning program is not helpful to parents.

The early childhood educators and the current providers are also raising some issues. They're concerned that because there will be no availability of partnerships between schools, school boards and the actual providers of the child care, there are going to be some bidding wars and some staffing challenges. Are we looking at shutting down a system that's already in place with the YMCAs and the providers as the ECEs move into the school system? Because that's what I'm seeing. I don't think it was the government's intention to close a business sector that has been operating and servicing the child care field for so many years across Ontario. If anything, when we talk about child care providers, we always talk about the lack of availability: "We need to have more child care spaces." I think one of the unintended consequences of Bill 242 will be that providers will shut down.

There was one provider, a private operator. Her entire business model, every single location that she has operating currently, is in schools. She will not have that option available to her. She's going to have to change her entire model in order to still be in business come September 2010. I have to believe that that was not the intention of the Ministry of Education when they introduced Bill 242.

The bottom line: This bill is going to be hitting the not-for-profit sector of child care providers the hardest. Bill 242 is going to mean a complete reworking of how child care is provided in Ontario. I truly believe that the ministry has not given sufficient time and sufficient information to the providers, the parents and, ultimately, the schools to implement this without a lot of concerns and causes.

We are coming up to a traditional time of year when the school boards shut down. There is not a lot of activity that occurs at the local schools in July and August, when children are out of school. So even when we talk about the timeline from third reading debate of Bill 242 and September 2010, you need to truncate that by two months because you cannot wait until July and August of this year to be implementing, to be solving some of these details.

For parental choice, Bill 242 is not going to provide it. If you are able to tap into the full-day learning model, you will still have a challenge, and, I would argue, more of a challenge finding care for those PA days, for March break, for Christmas and, of course, over the summer holidays. You in fact have made it more challenging for parents to find care who want it and who need it for their children.

I'm going to leave the debate at that point, but I guess I would like an answer on why the assistant deputy minister is talking about homework for children not tapping into the before- and after-day program. I think that would be very helpful for today's debate, and I'm happy to take any questions.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

M^{me} France G  linas: I listened to the speech attentively. The member brings some good points, points that we have heard many times before in this debate and points that deserve an answer.

There's one particular one that I wanted to talk about, and those are the human resources challenges. For years, early childhood educators have been in the \$12-, \$13- to \$14-an-hour range. Are you surprised that people decide not to take three years of a college degree that is demanding and that costs a lot of money, effort and energy so that you can have a college degree in early childhood education and be paid \$12 to \$14 an hour?

As a parent of teenagers looking at what their career path should be—you may be very good at working with children, and it could be that your heart is all into working with early years, but when the job market is at the \$12-to-\$14-an-hour mark, no wonder we have a shortage of early childhood educators. The educators who are there are there because they have passion. Their hearts are in the right place. But when you can't pay your bills at the end of the day, it makes for a tough decision.

Yes, there will be a shortage of early childhood educators until they get the respect they deserve, with the pay and the benefits that they deserve, for the hard work that they do. The member brought that forward during her allocation, and I certainly support this.

We will need more early childhood educators. They have to be integrated with respect into a salary grid that respects the knowledge they have.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Mauro: I want to thank the member from Burlington for her comments. I'm pleased to offer a couple from our side of the House as well.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Dufferin-Caledon.

Mr. Bill Mauro: I'm sorry?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Dufferin-Caledon.

Mr. Bill Mauro: Dufferin-Caledon. I apologize; I got the riding name wrong.

I can tell you that, like most of us are completely aware, our constituency offices tend to be very much a sounding board, a litmus test, I guess you might say, for government legislation and policies that are brought forward from time to time. I can tell you that in my going-on-seven years here now, there have not been many pieces of legislation proposed in this assembly that have received as little negative feedback, at least in my constituency office, as this particular piece of legislation, Bill 242. If passed, I would suspect that it will be well favoured by most of the stakeholder groups that are involved in this issue.

I had two wonderful events in my riding when we first brought this forward, one at St. Vincent School in Thunder Bay and one at St. Patrick's School in Atikokan. All of the stakeholder groups involved—the teachers, the principals, the trustees, the administrators and the community at large—were very excited and very much favoured the introduction of this legislation. I think we're very excited to see it move forward.

As most people will know, it is a completely voluntary program. I think it's very important to remind people of that, especially parents. They are not required to do this. This is indeed voluntary, and it's a choice that's left up to parents to make on their own. I'm assuming that people will do that on a go-forward basis.

On the child care component as well, there have been some comments made in reference to the effect that this will have on child care. I think it's important to remind people that in our budget that was just introduced a very few short weeks ago, we invested \$63.5 million into child care, the money the feds did not come across with, that protected 8,000 child care spaces in the province and saved 1,000 jobs.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'm really pleased to make a few comments with respect to the very thoughtful presentation that was made by my colleague the member from Dufferin-Caledon.

I'd just like to comment on four points related to what she said, but note at the outset that nowhere has anyone said that we disagree with the idea of early childhood education and all-day learning; it's the way it's being implemented.

1600

The member raised some very important concerns with respect to the impact on not-for-profit child care providers as a result of this bill and how it skews the business model with a number of older children going into full-day learning with the ratios that are required for the younger children who are left. So it does put into some jeopardy whether or not some of these child care providers are going to be able to remain in service as a result of the changes being brought forward with this bill.

The second issue that she spoke to was the issue of the failure of the government members in committee to actually listen to some of the thoughtful presentations that were being made by some of the early childhood educators who came before the committee. Once again, this government is approaching this matter as a *fait accompli*. It doesn't really matter what you say in committee; their minds are made up and they're not amenable to any kind of change. We've seen that in other areas recently, most notably with the pharmacists, who had some excellent presentations that would have saved money and reduced some professional allowances, but once again, a *fait accompli*: They don't want to hear it.

The third point she made was, how we are going to pay for this in the context of the \$23-billion deficit this year? What happens to all of the other children who need

our help who are currently in the system? I'm thinking primarily of children with special needs, many of whom have issues that aren't being addressed by this government.

Then finally, there's the whole issue of the lack of clarity about how this is actually going to work in practical terms, on the ground and in the schools. It's the end of April now; September is coming. I hope we're not going to be left with a disastrous situation.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Kormos: It's always one's good fortune to be able to hear the participation by the member for Dufferin-Caledon on an issue like this. This is third reading. I suspect it's going to go to a vote relatively soon. That's regrettable.

Look, if the government were to seek unanimous consent to put this bill into committee of the whole House, we could still make those amendments, couldn't we? All it would take would be unanimous consent and we'd have this bill in committee of the whole and we could make those amendments and do the fine-tuning that people are calling for. But Ms. Jones isn't speaking on behalf of herself; she's the voice of a whole pile of constituents in her riding and, quite frankly, people beyond. If those people's voices aren't important, then what indeed is going on here? That means that the committee process, frustrating at best, so oftentimes, and the second and third reading process are really just a sham. That's not healthy. It certainly doesn't contribute to the democratic process.

I feel compelled during the course of this debate to reflect on the imminent demise of Crowland Central school down where I come from, down by Cooks Mills, Lyons Creek—a historic, rural school, a small school. Oh my goodness, the audacity of those families who want to maintain a small school of—oh, what?—150 students. That school is at risk of being shut down because you've got folks down there just like the folks up here who, because of the funding restrictions, are being forced to consolidate schools, so these same kids who are going to be spending all day learning are going to be spending an hour and a half on a bus before they begin their all-day learning, and then another hour and a half on a bus before they get home in the evening. I don't want to be the parent who has to deal with that kid or those kids dropped off at the doorstep.

France Gélinas is next. She's our member from Nickel Belt. I'm looking forward to listening to what she has to say about this matter as well.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Dufferin-Caledon has two minutes to respond.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm pleased that the members from Nickel Belt, Sault Ste. Marie, Whitby-Oshawa and Welland commented on my 20 minutes. I must say, I am disappointed that we didn't get any further explanation as to why a January 13 memo makes reference to "Additional material will be developed for parents to use

at home, should they choose not to enrol their children in the" before- and after-day in the "extended day." This to me is a non-starter. You have to be able to justify what possible reason there would be for providing homework for parents who choose not to enrol their children in the before- and after-day program when this program starts for kids as young as three years and eight months old. I did not get the explanation that I wanted in committee when I asked the parliamentary assistant. The Minister of Education was in the House during debate and I did not get a response at that point. I think it's indicative of a government that is choosing not to listen and not to respond. If you're proud of this program, then justify it and explain what is meant when the assistant deputy minister is talking about extended material developed for parents to use at home—sounds like homework, talks like homework, reads like homework, so explain it. If that's not what it is, then tell me what it is, because I think parents have a right to know and, quite frankly, so do school boards and teachers.

Thank you for allowing me to participate in third reading debate and, while I don't look forward to the vote, I'm sure that it will come imminently.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It's my pleasure to participate in the third reading of Bill 242, full-day early learning in Ontario. Basically, the government has announced funding for full-day kindergarten. The goal is to provide programs for 35,000 students in 2010, 50,000 students in 2011, and full implementation by 2015-16. The cost will be about \$200 million in the first year and \$300 million in the second year, rising to about \$1.5 billion by the time it reaches 2015-16. About 25% of schools already have class space, we were told, for full-day kindergarten, and we were told that there would be one certified teacher and one early child care worker in each class and that the class size will go to about an average of 26 students. Before- and after-school care will be provided on a needs basis for a fee, depending on available space. This is about all we know about the bill. Although lots of people have come with lots of questions, most of the questions remain.

I will be talking this afternoon about a letter that has been written by, I would say, the heavyweights of French-language education in Ontario. They have banded together and penned a letter that all four heavyweights in the Franco-Ontarian education system ask the government to respond to. Given that they are Franco-Ontarian, the letter is in French. I will quote from the letter.

So who are those four heavyweights? Well, the first one is l'Association franco-ontarienne des conseils scolaires catholiques, the French Catholic school board. What's the second one? L'Association des directions et directions adjointes des écoles franco-ontariennes, the principals' and vice-principals' association. The third heavyweight is l'Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens, the French teachers. The fourth one is l'Association des conseils scolaires des

écoles publiques de l'Ontario, the French public school board.

On April 21, they wrote to les membres du comité législatif permanent de la politique sociale, the members of the social policy committee of this Legislative Assembly, about Bill 242, and they made specific recommendations regarding French-language schools. Allow me to quote the opening paragraph:

« Mesdames, Messieurs,

« Les organismes œuvrant en éducation de langue française—ce sont les quatre organismes que je viens de vous lire—« ont pris connaissance des amendements proposés au projet de loi 242 par les différents partis et vous font part de leur intérêt en la matière. Nous intervenons dans le seul but »—les quatre organismes ont un seul but—« de nous assurer que le développement de l'éducation de langue française en Ontario ne soit pas mis en péril par la mise en œuvre du programme d'apprentissage des jeunes enfants. »

Le message est clair; le paragraphe d'ouverture en dit long : « Le programme d'apprentissage des jeunes enfants, le projet de loi 242, risque de mettre en péril le développement de l'éducation de langue française en Ontario. »

1610

C'est assez bizarre qu'aujourd'hui, la journée où on vient d'adopter dans la Chambre le projet de loi déclarant le Jour des Franco-Ontariens et des Franco-Ontariennes, comme Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes, les organismes doivent se mettre ensemble pour venir à bout d'être entendus, parce qu'un projet de loi est en train de mettre en péril le développement de l'éducation en langue française en Ontario. Depuis le règlement 17, et je dirais même avant ça, tous les Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes le savent : la survie de la francophonie en Ontario passe par l'éducation. Quand on a un projet de loi d'un gouvernement qui risque de mettre en péril le développement de l'éducation en langue française en Ontario, c'est sérieux. C'est très sérieux.

Ils disent : « Vous savez tous que l'offre de services à la petite enfance nous tient à cœur, car c'est un des moyens utilisés par notre communauté pour réduire les écarts et améliorer le rendement des élèves de langue française. »

Le paragraphe d'ouverture met la table pour ce qui s'en vient. On est en train de parler d'un projet de loi qui risque d'avoir des ramifications sérieuses et de longue durée sur le développement de l'éducation en langue française.

Ils disent : « Nous voulons que les élèves ayants droit réussissent. » Les ayants droit, ce sont les enfants qui ne parlent peut-être pas bien le français, mais qui ont droit à une éducation en français en Ontario. Souvent, ces enfants-là vont apprendre à parler français dans nos écoles francophones. On veut que ces élèves-là réussissent.

« On veut que la viabilité de nos communautés ne soit pas menacée par le modèle provincial de la majorité linguistique de l'Ontario. » Ce sont des mots qui pèsent

lourd pour les Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes. On parle d'une menace à la viabilité de nos communautés. On parle de choses sérieuses qui ont été écrites par quatre organismes champions de l'éducation francophone en Ontario. Ces gens-là parlent de menace à la viabilité de nos communautés; ils parlent de la mise en péril du développement de l'éducation de langue française en Ontario. Ils doivent être pris au sérieux, et on se doit de leur donner des réponses.

La lettre continue en disant : « Nous vous demandons par la présente de poser les questions difficiles et de faire les interventions suivantes dans le cadre des débats de l'Assemblée législative qui se passent à ce moment.

« Les partenaires en éducation de langue française soussignés »—les quatre que je vous ai nommées : l'Association franco-ontarienne des conseils scolaires catholiques, l'Association des directions et directions adjointes des écoles franco-ontariennes, l'Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens et l'Association des conseils scolaires des écoles publiques de l'Ontario. Ils demandent la flexibilité nécessaire pour leur permettre de maintenir les services de maternelle et de jardin d'enfants qu'ils offrent déjà depuis une dizaine d'années. Ça fait une décennie que ces organismes-là offrent le jardin à temps plein, la maternelle à temps plein.

Quand on entend le gouvernement parler d'un concept révolutionnaire, ce n'est certainement pas en s'inspirant du modèle des écoles francophones qu'on parle de ça. Ce modèle-là n'a pas été créé pour les francophones et n'a pas été créé par les francophones; il est là, vraiment, pour la majorité linguistique anglophone. Puis, c'est correct, mais ça ne peut pas se faire en mettant en péril le développement de l'éducation en langue française; ça ne peut pas se faire comme une menace à la viabilité de nos communautés francophones.

Donc, que ce soit au plan du financement, de l'embauche du personnel ou encore au plan des partenariats communautaires établis pour assurer les services avant et après les heures de classe, ainsi que des programmes complémentaires importants à la minorité linguistique, ils demandent une flexibilité. Ils ne demandent pas d'enlever le projet de loi. Ils ne demandent rien d'extraordinaire. Ils demandent une flexibilité pour reconnaître le modèle qui a été développé pour et par les francophones et le droit de s'ajuster et de continuer à exister pendant qu'on s'ajuste à une nouvelle loi. Ce n'est pas beaucoup. On demande une flexibilité, mais à date, le gouvernement a refusé cette flexibilité.

Mon collègue de Trinity-Spadina a parlé des amendements que le parti néo-démocrate avait mis de l'avant qui auraient permis la flexibilité demandée dans cette lettre, et à date, le gouvernement dit non. J'espère qu'ils vont changer d'idée.

Je commence avec les questions à poser qui sont difficiles et les interventions qu'elles demandent.

La première est la reconnaissance des particularités des conseils de langue française en situation minoritaire. Ce qu'ils recommandent est que la mise en œuvre du

programme d'apprentissage pour les jeunes enfants soit faite avec une plus grande considération pour les particularités des conseils scolaires de langue française. Ils en font trois points.

Le premier est que les conseils scolaires de langue française gèrent la prestation de la maternelle et du jardin depuis 10 ans grâce à un modèle de financement différent de celui proposé, et ils ont besoin de savoir si les fonds générés par ce nouveau programme pourront leur servir à mettre sur pied des programmes pour les enfants de trois ans. C'est une question légitime qui leur permettrait de planifier en conséquence et qui demande une réponse.

Deuxième point, encore sur la reconnaissance des particularités : les conseils scolaires de langue française ont besoin de savoir s'ils pourront continuer à recevoir le financement adapté au bassin plus limité de leur clientèle scolaire en réduisant le seuil-repère du nombre d'enfants par salle de classe de 26 à 20 enfants. Encore là, mon collègue en a parlé beaucoup. Quand on parle d'une moyenne de 26, ça pourrait facilement dire qu'on aura 30 bouts de chou dans ces classes-là. Pour le modèle francophone, ils demandent une moyenne de 20 enfants comme seuil-repère.

Les conseils scolaires de langue française ont besoin de plus de flexibilité au niveau du modèle de dotation proposé pour la mise en œuvre du modèle, étant donné le nombre limité d'éducatrices et d'éducateurs de la petite enfance de langue française en Ontario.

Les efforts de recrutement ont déjà été faits. On sait déjà qu'il n'y aura pas suffisamment d'éducateurs et d'éducatrices de la petite enfance pour rencontrer les besoins des écoles francophones. Le gouvernement se doit d'adresser ça; il se doit au moins de leur donner la flexibilité qu'ils demandent pour être en ligne avec la réalité. On ne peut pas les inventer, ces travailleurs et travailleuses; ils doivent avoir un diplôme, mais on sait qu'on n'en a pas beaucoup qui pourront offrir un service en français de qualité.

« Donc, nous recommandons l'ajout d'un paragraphe distinct qui autorisera le conseil scolaire de langue française à modifier le programme d'apprentissage des jeunes enfants à temps plein et les programmes prolongés payants avant et après les heures pour mieux répondre aux particularités des communautés de langue française vivant en milieu minoritaire. » Ils demandent une flexibilité. Ce n'est pas beaucoup à demander.

En deuxième temps : une entente avec les fournisseurs. « Nous recommandons que les conseils scolaires de langue française aient la possibilité de maintenir, de renouveler et de conclure des ententes avec les fournisseurs de services de garde pour offrir le programme de jour prolongé à partir de 2010-2011 et pour les années subséquentes. » C'est une demande qui doit, au minimum, recevoir une réponse.

Recrutement et rétention du personnel—c'est le point numéro 3. Il y en a sept. « Nous recommandons que le projet de loi 242 prévoit des mesures visant à pallier aux difficultés de recrutement des ressources humaines » et pour assurer la mise en œuvre du programme PAGE.

« Il faut prévoir des mesures d'équité salariale et des dispositions pour les avantages sociaux afin que les salaires soient comparables partout dans la province afin d'éviter la perte de nos ressources aux grands conseils anglophones. Déjà, nos conseils ont signalé une pénurie d'éducatrices et d'éducateurs certifiés. »

1620

Si le programme, le projet de loi, mène aux programmes à temps plein pour les bouts de chou, et un conseil est capable d'attirer des travailleurs d'un conseil à l'autre parce qu'un a plus de ressources que l'autre, le gouvernement, par ses actions, crée des inégalités. Les conseils scolaires de langue française craint ces inégalités et les quatre ont demandé que ce soit discuté.

Numéro 4 : « Programmation d'apprentissage: nous recommandons que la programmation soit bien adaptée, par opposition à une simple traduction que l'on voit souvent, aux besoins particuliers des élèves qui fréquentent les écoles de langue française, et qu'elle tienne compte des stratégies de littératie particulières aux francophones. La programmation qui va être offerte pendant la maternelle et le jardin à temps plein ne doit pas être une traduction de ce qu'on a offert aux conseils anglophones. Ça doit être un programme d'apprentissage qui reflète les besoins des enfants francophones, ce qui veut dire souvent une approche différente face à la littératie.

« Des services en français dans les écoles de langue anglaise : nous recommandons que l'article 25.1, qui permet aux écoles de langue anglaise d'offrir des services en français, soit retiré. Ne vous méprenez pas : nous voulons que le plus grand nombre d'élèves parlent français, mais nous craignons que cette offre n'ait pour résultat d'inciter les parents dont les enfants ont le droit de fréquenter une école de langue française à les inscrire dans une école de langue anglaise plus proche au domicile. Cette migration augmentera le taux d'assimilation des francophones. »

C'est un point important. C'est sûr qu'on veut que tous les enfants aient accès à une éducation en français. On veut également que les écoles anglophones offrent une bonne éducation en français, offrent de bons cours de français. Ce n'est pas là la question. La question est plutôt que les écoles francophones sont dispersées et couvrent de grandes régions géographiques. Les écoles anglophones sont beaucoup plus nombreuses. Donc, ils devient facile pour un parent de choisir l'éducation anglophone de ses enfants. C'est souvent une décision plus difficile de choisir une école francophone qui, comme je vous le dis, couvre de grands districts, couvre de grands territoires.

Des coûts supplémentaires de l'éducation en langue française : « Nous recommandons que le financement pour les groupes francophones reconnaisse le coût supplémentaire de livrer les services en éducation auprès d'une communauté en situation minoritaire. Il est recommandé que le financement soit intégré aux subventions axées sur les élèves, sur les besoins des élèves, et que les facteurs pour calculer les fonds

octroyés aux conseils de langue française reconnaissent leur situation particulière : la distance des écoles de langue française aux domiciles familiaux; manque d'accès à l'école de langue française; transport et durée du trajet en autobus; coût de la promotion auprès des parents; traduction des documents en français afin de pouvoir transiger avec les municipalités; pénurie de personnel francophone, etc. » Et la liste s'allonge rapidement.

Au point 7, le dernier, disposition transitoire et protection des droits constitutionnels : « Nous recommandons que la formulation du paragraphe 260.8(1) du projet de loi soit révisée. À titre de responsables des écoles de langue française, nous devons nous assurer que toutes les dispositions du projet loi 242 soit assujetties aux protections des sous-sections 4 et 4.1 de la section 1 de la Loi sur l'éducation. Ces sous-sections reconnaissent les garanties de la section 93 de l'Acte constitutionnel de 1868 qui porte sur nos droits confessionnels, et la section 23 de la Charte canadienne des droits et libertés, qui porte sur nos droits linguistiques à titre de conseils scolaires de langue française. » Ils vont en détail sur les différents articles de la loi.

Je me rends compte que le temps manque. Je veux remercier M^{me} Dorothée Petit-Pas de l'Association franco-ontarienne des conseils scolaires catholiques, M. Normand Delparte, qui est le président de l'Association des directions et directions adjointes des écoles franco-ontariennes, M. Benoit Mercier, qui est ici avec nous aujourd'hui, en fait, qui est le président de l'Association des enseignants et des enseignants franco-ontariens, et M. Roland Marion, qui est le président de l'Association des conseils scolaires des écoles publiques de l'Ontario.

The French schools support full-day learning; they have been doing it for over a decade. The way this bill is brought forward basically has the potential to be very detrimental to the development of French-language education in Ontario as well as have a severe negative effect on the viability of francophone communities throughout Ontario. Those are serious threats. Those are serious issues. They were brought together in a letter signed by the two boards, the Catholic and the French, and the public French board, as well as the principals' association and the teachers' association from the francophone side. They're asking for changes. They're asking for flexibility. They're not asking for much, but they need it. I hope the government will listen.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments.

Mr. David Oraziatti: It's a pleasure to participate in today's discussion, third reading debate of Bill 242, full-day learning.

I have to say that my community is receiving very well the exciting news of this bill and the opportunities that the young people in our community will have for full-day learning. This is another positive initiative in the education sector that our government has delivered on over the last seven years. You can add this to capping the primary classes of the early years, K to 3, and also the

Good Places to Learn initiative that has seen over \$4.8 billion in new infrastructure go towards schools and improving the learning environments for young people in the province of Ontario. I know that in my community of Sault Ste. Marie, per pupil funding has increased by over 55% in just seven years. That has meant more teachers, more librarians, more support staff, more educational assistants and great environments for our young people. The full-day learning program this fall will see 35,000 young people have the opportunity to learn in over 1,400 classes in about 600 different schools around the province. As you know, Speaker, we're going to be phasing this in. This is a fairly significant financial endeavour as well, but it's one that we're committed to and one that's important. By 2015, all the schools in the province of Ontario will have the opportunity to participate in the full-day learning programs.

I know that in Sault Ste. Marie eight schools are now involved in full-day learning. I want to congratulate Mario Turco, the director of the Algoma District School Board, and John Stadnyk, the director of the Huron-Superior Catholic District School Board, for their leadership and support of this initiative. They are embracing it, and the parents and community members that I speak to about this initiative are very, very positive in their comments around this. We know what the research says, and it's —

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Questions and comments.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's a real pleasure to be able to engage in this debate, and I look forward to having a 20-minute rotation to discuss this bill in more detail and how it impacts my community and certainly my demographic, in fact. It's an opportunity, I think, for us to put forward ideas in this chamber. Certainly we're very concerned on this side of the Legislature that, given the time frame this government, this Liberal government, is trying to implement full-day learning in, a very short time frame, perhaps they ought to slow down, particularly given the price tag. I'm looking forward to speaking in more depth on some of the challenges that are facing parents of four- and five-year-olds.

Last week I had a great opportunity to be back in my community, as most of us were, starting on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays, out communicating with people now that the weather is warmer, whether it was in an Earth Day celebration or whether it was pancake breakfasts in our rural communities. There was a lot of confusion about what this program is going to mean for everyday families, and I think that confusion warrants further discussion. It means, I think, that parents at home ought to be looking at what the fine print is with this piece of legislation, what this bill will mean to families.

I look forward to expanding on that over the course of the next, I guess, 30 minutes.

1630

But I want to congratulate my colleague from Nickel Belt, who always, I must say, ensures that we in this chamber are fully apprised of what is going on in her

community. I thank her for bringing forward her views on this contentious piece of legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm delighted to respond to the conversation around Bill 242. I think it's important that we go back and look at the actual model that's going to be put in place, because it's quite different than the model where you have a teacher in a full-day classroom. It's quite different than the model of parents who choose to keep their children in full-day child care—which, incidentally, they can continue to do, if that's the model they wish. We're using a model that is much more akin to what Dr. Pascal recommended, which is that we need to take the best of what the certified academic teacher can bring to the kindergarten and junior kindergarten classroom, but also the best of what the early childhood educator can bring. So we've got a model where, during the actual formal full-day school day, there will be both a kindergarten teacher and an early childhood educator with the group of four- and five-year-olds.

Before the school day begins and after the school day ends, we will also make child care available to parents at a fee. But that will be offered in a lot of cases by the same early childhood educator who's present with the classroom teacher in the morning or possibly a different early childhood educator who's present with the kindergarten teacher in the afternoon.

This model is, in fact, quite unlike any of the models that are out there now, and that's why that model is being protected in the legislation. There will be some flexibility—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Questions and comments?

The member from Nickel Belt has up to two minutes to respond.

M^{me} France Gélinas: It was a little bit disconcerting to hear the member from Sault Ste. Marie and the member from Guelph go on and explain what Bill 242 is about, when I had just finished stating for 20 minutes that there were issues that needed to be addressed. I would have liked, at a minimum, that they would have said, "We hear what the member has to say. We will try to fill in the blanks." But, no, they both pretended that the serious issues that I have brought forward, which have been brought forward by four of the heavyweights in French education in Ontario—it's as if none of this matters.

Neither one of them even acknowledged that I had brought forward a serious issue from the francophone community. They talked about what full-day learning is about. I think we all know. The Franco-Ontarian people who want a change to the bill know exactly what the bill is about. We don't need to be told. What we need right now is a government that acknowledges that the issues that have been brought forward are serious, and they deserve, at a minimum, that they listen to them and give them an answer. But I didn't hear any of that.

They went on and explained what the full-day learning was going to be. I am not too sure who they're talking to; I have a fairly good idea what the all-day learning is about. We have been talking about this for the last two months. How about talking to me? I've just explained to you that there's a serious issue brewing with the francophone community. We are talking about making sure that francophone communities continue to exist, and they ignored it all.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'm pleased to be able to participate in today's debate on the impacts of full-day kindergarten on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus and, most of all, other moms and dads across the province.

At the outset, let me say that this bill is deeply personal to me, since I am one of the very few legislators in this place who will be impacted by this bill. So I'll take the opportunity not just to speak to the theoretical model of this bill, but to the personal impacts—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Order. Order.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: —that this will have on my family. That's why I'll begin my remarks on Bill 242, the kindergarten bill, with a personal story.

Amid the laughter by the Liberals who do not have children right now in the system, you may know that my daughter, Victoria, just turned five and is currently attending half-day junior kindergarten in one of Ontario's finest public schools. After speaking with my husband and our caregiver and taking other matters into consideration, our family felt it was best for our daughter to continue in half-day learning when she reaches senior kindergarten next year. That was our choice. We had expected the government of Ontario to respect that. And although the Pascal report called for parental choice—and I quote, "parental choice"—of either half- or full-day learning, I quickly found out the hard way, as the Ottawa Citizen so aptly pointed out today, that the Liberal plan will actually force parents like my husband, Joe, and I to take it, to leave it or to transfer their child out of their neighbourhood school if full-day learning is not the option.

In fact, I was told by my daughter's school to transfer out of our neighbourhood, and then I was told by the Minister of Education that if I didn't like that, I could keep my daughter at home until she was six, when, presumably, the Premier and the education minister would get their way and start teaching her sexual education. I asked, "What type of choice is that? Where in the formula are parents and families being factored in?" There really is no choice, and I know I speak for parents in saying that neither of those options are viable.

I can hardly imagine removing a child from a learning environment that they are comfortable in, one in which they have made new friends, in a neighbourhood that is familiar, in a daycare that is comfortable and safe. Nor

can I imagine removing a child from a school altogether for the first grade. Why in the name of God would the education minister suggest to a parent who has had their child in school already for a year to remove them until they are six years old? That is a shame.

The Ottawa Citizen got it right today when it described the Liberals' identity crisis on full-day learning. They said:

"The province has suggested all along that parents will continue to have the choice to keep their children in half-day kindergarten if they wish. Being told to find another school is likely not what any parent had in mind.

"It gets more confusing. Ministry of Education officials are now saying that a third option is for parents to enrol their children in full-day kindergarten but pick them up halfway through the day. This, too, could be problematic. If the program is designed from the get-go to be full-day, will teachers be able properly to assess students who are in class only half as much as their peers? What will be the effect on students?"

This is probably the best line from that editorial in today's Ottawa Citizen, and I encourage the government members to look at it: "The option has the worrisome sound of an ad-hoc plan."

So despite Pascal's reference to choice on page 14 of his own report, the report that the Liberal government is touting, parents like me and my husband, Joe, are advised to read the fine print on early full-day learning. When Dr. Charles Pascal released his early learning report to the Premier in June 2009, the report, *With Our Best Future in Mind*, stated on page 14, "Children's participation would be by parental choice, with parents having the option of half, full (school hours), or fee-based extended day of programming." So I ask, what has changed, and what is next?

1640

Indeed, it's increasingly clear that the Liberals have adopted an all-or-nothing approach to full-day kindergarten. It will be a real shock to parents right across the province, come September, particularly those parents who believed there would be choice: those parents who will find out there will be fees attached to before- and after-care programming; and those parents who will find themselves in a real spot on a PD day, a snow day, a March break day and during summer and Christmas vacations. They will have one choice in the matter: They will either have to pay for two child care spots—one at the school with the fee-based programming and another for these other days—or they're going to be stuck every single time there is no school. When school is closed, these parents are not going to be able to have an easy and available option.

Again, parents are going to need to read the fine print. And since the Liberals are forcing this through in such a short period of time and without a lengthy implementation process, I only hope, through me and through my caucus colleagues in the Progressive Conservative Party, that by speaking out, parents will check the fine print sooner rather than later. As Andrea Mrozek wrote

of my predicament in last week's Citizen, "Province-wide, taxpayer-funded early learning programs spell the end of choice in child care."

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Member for Toronto Centre: In your chair.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: This presents another very serious concern with this bill: It will put daycare providers out of business: There will be absolutely no consideration given to the consequences of eliminating the not-for-profit sector from providing before- and after-school programming for four- and five-year-old children.

There was also no consideration given to the small independent daycare providers who offer care, subsidized or otherwise, in their homes. Without access to four- and five-year-old students, home daycares and not-for-profits will suffer, and that's just not fair.

As Mrozek said in her Citizen op-ed on Friday last week, "By introducing a monolithic taxpayer-funded plan, legitimate and regulated child care providers can't compete." I repeat: They cannot compete. "When ... government subsidizes" a business, "it means others are put out of business."

She's right, and in this chamber, I'm going to defend people like Sue Ayyad, the YMCAs and the Karen Fromms of this world, because if I don't and the PC caucus doesn't, who will? The big-box government across the way, where one size fits all? I don't think so. Hardly.

First they remove parental choice. Secondly, they're putting regulated, licensed and essential community organizations and small businesses out of business.

Equally as concerning, however, is the third flaw in this plan; that is, the Liberals are mortgaging the very futures of those they are forcing into full-day, every-day school.

Let me explain. To implement this program, it will cost \$1.5 billion in operational costs next year alone, and likely another \$300 million in capital renovation costs to retrofit rooms, add space and bring in equipment. This is a very real concern I heard from my own school board, the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board, concerned about space. If you can just imagine my own little daughter's school, where right now there is a half-day junior kindergarten and a half-day senior kindergarten class. They are going to four kindergarten classes next year. That's going to create a significant burden on the budget of the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board to retrofit those rooms. That brings you up to \$1.8 billion in new—I repeat, new—spending at a time when our province has a \$21-billion deficit.

Even then, with an estimated \$1.8 billion in new spending, it's likely not enough. As trustee Michael Barrett of the Durham District School Board said, "The funding is not adequate to roll out the program as prescribed by the province." This is troubling, given that the Premier told the CBC in June that he didn't know the cost of the program. Can you imagine? He still doesn't

know what the cost of this program is going to be, and we have a \$21-billion deficit.

That is where we, in the official opposition, are concerned by the lack of planning by this Premier—and just last week we saw where that gets him. But it's of deep concern to us.

So that begs the question: How much more are we expected to shell out for a program that is not tested? As the National Post wrote on October 29, 2009, in their editorial, "Given Ontario's massive deficit, why is Premier Dalton McGuinty focused on imposing an expensive, full-day kindergarten program on the province?" And as parent Tanya Allen of Parental Choice says, "I don't want to be forced into using all-day kindergarten.... This program is not only a waste of money, but it also obliterates parents' choice in child care."

This type of spending right now, at this moment in our province's history, is unsustainable. The PC party believes that the government simply cannot afford this potentially multi-billion-dollar program right now.

With the Institute of Marriage and Family Canada estimating that it will cost close to \$9,000 per year, it's no wonder parents like Kate Tennier of kindergartencredit.ca offer a alternative for the spend-happy Liberals to consider: ensure that early education funds follow the child by giving the funding to moms and dads instead. That's what she suggests.

Above all, the fundamental flaw in this legislation is that it is, as Irene Atkinson of the Toronto District School Board says, "one of the most ill-conceived and badly thought-through programs that the province has ever announced."

It is very clear that this government lacks preparedness, given the issues my own family has confronted due to the uncertainties. The Ottawa Citizen acknowledged this in citing that the province has created unrealistic expectations about its ability to accommodate.

Interjections.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's clear that I've excited the Liberals today. I'm not quite sure how they can be so excited by actually explaining in this chamber my own personal experience with this system. I guess this is where the disconnect comes in: when you're actually confronted with an issue as a parent. I feel fortunate that I'm able to raise in this chamber the issues that we face, to a number of people in this chamber who will probably not ever have to experience this issue.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Toronto Centre will have a chance to respond, as will others from the government side.

Continue.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thanks, Madam Speaker. Again, I think it just speaks to the hostility in this debate: If you do not agree with them, that's too bad. Well, I don't agree with them on this and I should have a choice. Dr. Pascal told me I should. So when it was our opportunity to find out our own way for our own child in my family, to decide what was best for her, and we were told we

didn't really have that option—that's where we are placed in a real conundrum in this chamber.

Again, it's a great idea to try and put this forward. In fact, there are many models that have been expressed or explored throughout the province. I've heard of several. For example, there could be alternating full days. But again, it should be the parents' choice at that age.

I'm fortunate that my daughter is in a great school. I'm fortunate that she has a great caregiver. And I'm fortunate that, as parents, we are able to take her to school and know her teacher, know the students in her classroom and participate in our community. But taking our choice away until my daughter is six years old is really not an option. I really resent the fact that the minister told me that I should remove my child from school, after she was there for a year. She said, "You don't have to have your child in school until the age of six." Well, my daughter is already there, and there are several other parents in my own predicament.

In any event, I'm not going to go on much longer, because I am really interested to hear what the member from Toronto Centre has to say to me, given the hostilities that I experienced while I was speaking—because actually some of the hostilities didn't have anything to do with my remarks. So I am looking forward to hearing from them and to concluding this debate at said time.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rick Johnson: I'm pleased to comment on some of the comments made by the member from Nepean—Carleton.

You know what? I'm jealous. I'm jealous of you because your child is fortunate to be going to school in this time, when we have these programs available—optional programs for parents who can attend. They can use these programs if they want. Having half-day programs—what a great luxury.

1650

When my daughter started kindergarten in the 1990s, the school board had already switched to full-day programs every other day. They couldn't afford to run the buses because of the massive cuts that were inflicted by Harris and the government. Through cuts and downsizes, boards were given the option: They could run JK if they wanted to. If they wanted to run JK, they could do that, but the funding disappeared for running smaller class sizes in primary grades. Our board made a decision when I was on that board to re-introduce junior kindergarten and keep smaller class sizes, but the result was that we had to bump the class sizes in the larger grades. What happened? Strikes. How many days did my children miss because of strikes?

They got to high school, and didn't miss a day. Funny—the government changed, and everything worked out.

As for materials for home help: Earlier today there was mention made about the fact that boards will provide materials to take home. We all know that when parents

contribute to their children's education and help out with it, their children do great. The fact that boards are going to provide materials to go home to help out parents with their children's reading and getting a good start at a younger age is wonderful. Whether it's a mom and dad, or a mom and a mom, or a dad and a dad, or grandparents, or single parents—all those don't seem to be in your orbit right now—I think it's extremely important that everybody has an option to get into a system that is going to be open.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I'm pleased to comment on Bill 242 and the address of my colleague, the member for Nepean—Carleton.

I think that this bill is just an indication of the lack of planning by this particular government. We've got the most massive deficit ever seen in this province, and unfortunately it's as a direct result not of a recession—it's easy to blame the recession—but of the malfeasance of this government, the corruption of this government—

Mr. Glen R. Murray: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I don't think you can accuse the government of corruption.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I would ask the member to withdraw that word.

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I certainly will withdraw that I said that this government is corrupt. But malfeasance of this government—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I would ask the member from Cambridge to withdraw the comment and not use it again.

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I withdraw the word—do you want me to say the word?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): No.

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: No? Okay. I just want to make sure of that.

In any event, we have this massive deficit that this government has no intention of paying off. Their plan is that if you put it off far enough, we're all going to be dead in the long run and we'll still have a deficit. As a matter of fact, they're going to double this deficit, but that's just the start.

There's no doubt they're going to attempt to raise taxes. You are going to see the new HST radically increased right after an election if this government wins. You can bet on it.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Glen R. Murray: The reason I was upset before is because I think on two levels. One, day-long learning for low-income people and families that are struggling creates not just the possibility for children—who in many homes that I represent don't have access to magazines and there's limited access to the English language, which is important for their ability to transition into full productive citizens. But there were also some comments made that some people live in a world—and the member

for Ottawa West—not Ottawa West, Nepean—Carleton. I apologize. I want to make sure I get that right. I put a child through school. I'm a grandparent—high-needs kids with disabilities who came home to a single dad.

There were references made to the curriculum, and part of the reason for this early childhood education and this curriculum, which I'm still a great believer in, is so it takes the onus off six- and eight-year-olds—if anyone has actually read the curriculum and read the day-long learning act—to not have to explain to their peers why they come from a different family than just a mum-and-dad family. If you have ever seen how heartbreaking it is for a child with a disability—

Interjection.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: On a point of order, Speaker: I ask the Minister of Education to withdraw what she just said.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I didn't hear what she said. I'll have to pass on that. Thank you.

Mr. Glen R. Murray: What it has unfortunately done is enabled some of the people who are advocates of hate—the McVetys and others out there who are too quick to drive the differences. At one point, obviously if it's not this year, it is our responsibility as adults to make sure that children don't have to explain the differences, that every child should be free of bullying. Some members in that member's party talked about ending bullying. Well, getting facts about kids' body parts in grade 1 and getting facts about the diversity of families in grade 3—and that's all the curriculum said. It's a good curriculum, getting kids educated at four and five.

Kids have rights beyond their parents. I worked with a lot of children who died at 18 and 19 because they didn't get information about gay sexuality—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I think it really is important to just clarify what the member from Nepean—Carleton actually said. I think we're getting off on a tangent with respect to another matter, and certain thoughts and motives are being impugned here. I think it's really important that we focus on what we're talking about, which is Bill 242, and the very important points that the member from Nepean—Carleton was making with respect to young children, their ability to function in full-day class and the choices that parents are being asked to make when they're considering placing a very young child in an all-day learning environment.

It is important to note that parents should have the choice, whether they choose to put their child in full-day learning or half-day learning. The member was simply raising some of the concerns that she has for those parents, perhaps including herself, who don't choose to put their child in full-day learning, and what's going to happen then. Where else will they go? It's fine for the government to say, "Well, don't bother. Just keep them out of school until they're six." The practical matter is that she has a child who wants to go to school, may not be ready for full-day learning, as many children in the

province of Ontario are not. But then what happens? The government simply has not provided us with the answers. Do they go to another school in another area? Are you going to provide busing? What's going to happen with their classmates—a lot of practical considerations that the government is all too anxious to say, "Oh, don't worry about that," but parents are worried about them.

Here we are at the end of April, we've got another month or so to work out these very important, practical considerations that have to be dealt with, and there are no answers. The answer we get is, "Don't worry about it. We'll deal with it." September is coming, and I think parents have a right to know these things. I commend the member for Nepean—Carleton for raising these issues. They're practical considerations, they need to be dealt with, and this government is certainly not very forthcoming with any kind of answer.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Nepean—Carleton has up to two minutes to respond.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I just want to say thank you to my colleagues from Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock and Toronto Centre. It's clear we don't agree on the practical approach here. However, we should be engaged in a respectful debate on this matter. This actually does impact me. In a way, I didn't think so, because I thought there would be choice. But I appreciated you bringing your own personal experiences to the chamber, so I thank you for that.

I'd like to thank both my colleagues in the Conservative caucus: from Cambridge, who talked about the financial implications of this bill, as well as my colleague from Whitby—Oshawa, who I think expressed some of the practical concerns we have with this legislation.

I'd been very clear at the outset that I had concerns, and I still do, with the financial implications of this bill. Only when I became a parent did I understand the practicality issues with respect to this. Unfortunately, this place has become so polarized that no resolutions or amendments put forward by the opposition almost any time ever pass. Very infrequently do we see stakeholders come to debate or give deputations and any of their ideas ever accepted.

This is, I guess, a problem with a government that has been in office for a long time. It happens in every political party. But unfortunately, with this piece of legislation, if they cannot admit that it's not all going to be an unbumpy ride, then we're going to have a real problem come September. I can just tell you from my own experience that it has not been easy. All weekend, I spoke about this issue to parents who have the same concerns. I encourage the government to heed those warnings when they're implementing this. It's going to be an awfully expensive price tag, so we have to get it right.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

There being no further debate, on April 20, Mrs. Dombrowsky moved third reading of Bill 242. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

There will be a 30-minute bell. Call in the members.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I've just received a deferral slip. It reads as follows:

"To the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, dated April 26, 2010:

"Pursuant to standing order 28(h), I request that the vote on Bill 242, An Act to amend the Education Act and certain other Acts in relation to early childhood educators, junior kindergarten and kindergarten, extended

day programs and certain other matters, be deferred until Tuesday, April 27, 2010, after question period."

Third reading vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Orders of the day.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

It is my opinion that the ayes have it.

I declare that this House stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9 o'clock.

The House adjourned at 1702.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Aggelonitis, Hon. / L'hon. Sophia (LIB)	Hamilton Mountain	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Arthurs, Wayne (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	Attorney General / Procureur général Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Broten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Caplan, David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Carroll, M. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism and Culture / Ministre du Tourisme et de la Culture
Chiarelli, Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Crozier, Bruce (LIB)	Essex	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (LIB)	Prince Edward–Hastings	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Energy and Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Énergie et de l'Infrastructure
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry / Ministre du Développement du Nord, des Mines et des Forêts
Hampton, Howard (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Hoy, Pat (LIB)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Johnson, Rick (LIB)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kormos, Peter (NDP)	Welland	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Kular, Kuldeep (LIB)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Levac, Dave (LIB)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McMeekin, Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Hon. / L'hon. Carol (LIB)	Huron–Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Munro, Julia (PC)	York-Simcoe	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	
Murray, Glen R (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Oraziotti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB)	Kitchener-Conestoga	
Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (LIB)	Elgin-Middlesex-London	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (LIB)	Scarborough-Agincourt	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches-East York	
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Economic Development and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London-Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland-Quinte West	
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Nipissing	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton-Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto-Danforth	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga-Erindale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	
Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Perth-Wellington	Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener-Waterloo	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Garfield Dunlop
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Robert Bailey
Robert Bailey, Gilles Bisson
Jim Brownell, Kim Craiton
Bob Delaney, Garfield Dunlop
Amrit Mangat, Phil McNeely
John O'Toole
Clerks / Greffiers: William Short (pro tem.), Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Pat Hoy
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laura Albanese
Laura Albanese, Wayne Arthurs
Toby Barrett, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Pat Hoy, Norm Miller
Glen R Murray, Charles Sousa
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: David Orazietti
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Helena Jaczek
Bob Chiarelli, Steve Clark
Helena Jaczek, Kuldip Kular
Dave Levac, Rosario Marchese
Bill Mauro, David Orazietti
Joyce Savoline
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Laura Albanese, Michael A. Brown
Donna H. Cansfield, M. Aileen Carroll
Howard Hampton, Ernie Hardeman
Lisa MacLeod, Leeanna Pendergast
Jim Wilson
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Leeanna Pendergast
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Ted Chudleigh
Mike Colle, Christine Elliott
Peter Kormos, Reza Moridi
Leeanna Pendergast, Lou Rinaldi
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Bas Balkissoon
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Yasir Naqvi
Bas Balkissoon, Bob Delaney
Joe Dickson, Sylvia Jones
Amrit Mangat, Norm Miller
Yasir Naqvi, Michael Prue
Mario Sergio
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Norman W. Sterling
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Peter Shurman
M. Aileen Carroll, France Gélinas
Jerry J. Ouellette, David Ramsay
Liz Sandals, Peter Shurman
Norman W. Sterling, Maria Van Bommel
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Paul Miller
David Caplan, Kim Craiton
Jeff Leal, Gerry Martiniuk
Paul Miller, Bill Murdoch
Michael Prue, Lou Rinaldi
Tony Ruprecht
Clerks / Greffiers: Trevor Day (pro tem.), Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vic Dhillon
Vic Dhillon, Cheri DiNovo
Rick Johnson, Sylvia Jones
Jean-Marc Lalonde, Ted McMeekin
Shafiq Qaadri, Khalil Ramal
Elizabeth Witmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions / Comité
spécial de la santé mentale et des dépendances**

Chair / Président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott
Bas Balkissoon, Christine Elliott
Kevin Daniel Flynn, France Gélinas
Helena Jaczek, Sylvia Jones
Jeff Leal, Liz Sandals
Maria Van Bommel
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

Holocaust Memorial Day

Ms. Cheri DiNovo.....937

Newcomer Services for Youth

Mr. Bas Balkissoon.....937

Riding of Ottawa Centre

Mr. Yasir Naqvi.....937

Holocaust Memorial Day

Mr. Monte Kwinter.....938

**INTRODUCTION OF BILLS /
DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI****Taxation Amendment Act (Public Transit Expense
Tax Credit), 2010, Bill 42, Mr. O'Toole / Loi de
2010 modifiant la Loi sur les impôts (crédit d'impôt
pour dépenses de transports en commun), projet de
loi 42, M. O'Toole**

First reading agreed to.....939

Mr. John O'Toole.....939

Robert W. Runciman

Hon. Monique M. Smith.....939

Mr. Peter Kormos.....940

Mr. Tim Hudak.....941

Mr. Steve Clark.....941

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters).....942

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS**Hospital funding**

Mme France Gélinas.....942

Route 17/174

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde.....942

Service centres

Mr. Steve Clark.....943

**Jour des Franco-Ontariens et des Franco-
Ontariennes**

Mme France Gélinas.....943

Taxation

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel.....943

Hospital funding

Mrs. Christine Elliott.....943

Diagnostic services

Mme France Gélinas.....944

Ontario pharmacists

Ms. Helena Jaczek.....944

Taxation

Mr. Ernie Hardeman.....944

Ontario pharmacists

Mrs. Liz Sandals.....944

Changement de climat

M. Phil McNeely.....944

Order of business / Travaux de la Chambre

L'hon. Monique M. Smith.....945

Motion agreed to.....945

Franco-Ontarian Day Act, 2010, Bill 24,**Mrs. Meilleur / Loi de 2010 sur le Jour des Franco-
Ontariens et des Franco-Ontariennes, projet de loi
24, Mme Meilleur**

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur.....945

M. Peter Shurman.....946

Mme France Gélinas.....948

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde.....950

M. Garfield Dunlop.....951

M. Ted Arnott.....952

Mme Lisa MacLeod.....952

Second reading agreed to.....953

Franco-Ontarian Day Act, 2010, Bill 24,**Mrs. Meilleur / Loi de 2010 sur le Jour des Franco-
Ontariens et des Franco-Ontariennes, projet de loi
24, Mme Meilleur**

Third reading agreed to.....953

**Full Day Early Learning Statute Law Amendment
Act, 2010, Bill 242, Mrs. Dombrowsky / Loi de 2010
modifiant des lois en ce qui concerne
l'apprentissage des jeunes enfants à temps plein,
projet de loi 242, Mme Dombrowsky**

Mr. Rosario Marchese.....953

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn.....956

Ms. Sylvia Jones.....957

Mme France Gélinas.....957

Mr. Jim Brownell.....957

Mr. Rosario Marchese.....957

Ms. Sylvia Jones.....958

Mme France Gélinas.....960

Mr. Bill Mauro.....960

Mrs. Christine Elliott.....961

Mr. Peter Kormos.....961

Ms. Sylvia Jones.....961

Mme France Gélinas.....962

Mr. David Oraziotti.....964

Ms. Lisa MacLeod.....965

Mrs. Liz Sandals.....965

Mme France Gélinas.....965

Ms. Lisa MacLeod.....966

Mr. Rick Johnson.....968

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk.....968

Mr. Glen R. Murray.....968

Mrs. Christine Elliott.....969

Ms. Lisa MacLeod.....969

Third reading vote deferred.....970

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Monday 26 April 2010 / Lundi 26 avril 2010

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mme France Gélinas	925
Mr. Charles Sousa	925
Hon. John Wilkinson.....	925
Mr. Dave Levac.....	925
Mr. Reza Moridi.....	925
Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	925
Mrs. Maria Van Bommel	925
Hon. John Gerretsen.....	925
Hon. John Wilkinson.....	925
The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters).....	925

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Curriculum

Mr. Tim Hudak	925
Hon. Leona Dombrowsky	926

Full-day kindergarten

Mr. Tim Hudak	926
Hon. Leona Dombrowsky	926

Nurses

Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	927
Hon. Deborah Matthews	927

Nurses

Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	928
Hon. Deborah Matthews	928

Curriculum

Mrs. Christine Elliott.....	929
Hon. Leona Dombrowsky	929

Full-day kindergarten / Jardin d'enfants à temps plein

Mr. Rosario Marchese.....	929
Hon. Leona Dombrowsky	929
Mme France Gélinas	929

Mining industry

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast.....	930
Hon. Michael Gravelle.....	930

Taxation

Mr. Norm Miller	930
Hon. John Wilkinson.....	930

Public transit

Ms. Cheri DiNovo.....	931
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne.....	931

Taxation

Mr. Glen R. Murray.....	931
Hon. John Wilkinson.....	932

Taxation

Mrs. Joyce Savoline	932
Hon. James J. Bradley	932

Forest industry

Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	933
Hon. Michael Gravelle	933

Greenhouse gas emissions

Mr. Ted McMeekin	933
Hon. John Gerretsen.....	933

Organ and tissue donation

Mr. Frank Klees	934
Hon. Deborah Matthews	934

Hydro rates

Mr. Peter Tabuns.....	934
Hon. Brad Duguid	934

Ministry of Natural Resources

Mr. Rick Johnson	935
Hon. Linda Jeffrey	935

Visitor

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters).....	935
--------------------------------------	-----

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mrs. Christine Elliott.....	935
Mme France Gélinas	936
The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters).....	936

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

Taxation

Mr. John O'Toole.....	936
-----------------------	-----

South Glengarry community and business awards

Mr. Jim Brownell	936
------------------------	-----

Taxation

Mrs. Joyce Savoline	936
---------------------------	-----

London Clean and Green

Mr. Khalil Ramal	936
------------------------	-----

Pharmacists

Ms. Lisa MacLeod	937
------------------------	-----

Continued on inside back cover

0420N
X1
-023

No. 22



N° 22

ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Second Session, 39th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 39^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 27 April 2010

Mardi 27 avril 2010



Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

<http://www.ontla.on.ca/>

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7410 or 325-3708.

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7410 ou le 325-3708.

Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services
Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



Service du Journal des débats et d'interprétation
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400; télécopieur, 416-325-7430
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 27 April 2010

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 27 avril 2010

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by a moment of silence for inner thought and personal reflection.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ELECTION STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LES ÉLECTIONS

Ms. Smith, on behalf of Mr. Bentley, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 231, An Act to amend the Election Act and the Election Finances Act / Projet de loi 231, Loi modifiant la Loi électorale et la Loi sur le financement des élections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Debate?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I will be sharing my time this morning with the member from Willowdale, and as he has now reached his seat, I will be sharing it with him now.

Mr. David Zimmer: I was in a rush to get in. I got locked out this morning.

Anyway, I'm very pleased today to rise to speak to Bill 231 on third reading. This act, if passed, would amend the Election Act and the Election Finances Act. Third reading of this bill is the result of nearly two years of work. We've built on the recommendation of the Select Committee on Elections through public hearings. As well, extensive consultations with the Chief Electoral Officer have taken place. I think we can all agree that Bill 231 is better as a result of these consultations.

Bill 231 would improve our election system in a number of ways. It would give Ontarians with disabilities more equal opportunities to participate in the voting process, it would make our electoral system more responsive to the needs of voters throughout the province and abroad, and it would bring our election finance system into the 21st century. What I'd like to do this morning is to take some time and tell the members of this House how Bill 231 would accomplish these very important improvements.

Ontarians with disabilities: I want to talk about voting technology as it affects them. We've learned a lot about the barriers faced by people with disabilities when they

vote. We're bringing forward ways to break down these barriers. The use of voting technology could allow electors with disabilities to vote privately and independently. Bill 231 would require the Chief Electoral Officer to use accessible voting equipment in returning office advance polls starting with the 2011 election. This is a very significant change to the voting process. It puts Ontario at the cutting edge of these issues.

It is our responsibility to ensure that even as the voting system evolves, it maintains the highest level of security. Indeed, this goes to the very heart of our democracy. We recognize that as technology evolves, additional voting methods may become as secure as the equipment that Bill 231 requires. That's why we have created a process that would allow the Chief Electoral Officer to direct the use of an alternative voting method if certain conditions are met. These are the conditions: successful testing at a by-election; protecting the integrity and security of the voting process; consulting with parties, experts and members of the public; and—and this is important—approval by a legislative committee after public hearings. This meets the key shared objectives. It would create a process for voting methods to evolve with technology, it would ensure that the integrity and security of elections is maintained, and it would require that there be significant opportunities for public input, including experts in the field of alternative voting methods. To make sure that we're on the right track here, the Chief Electoral Officer would also be required to conduct a comprehensive review and report on alternative voting technologies by June 30, 2013. Voters with disabilities, and indeed all electors, need to vote privately and independently. And they need to be sure that the voting method they are using counts a vote the way it was cast. We are confident that the measures taken in Bill 231 would meet these requirements.

Let me take a few minutes now and speak to some additional access measures. As important as new voting equipment and other voting technologies are for accessibility, there is more that must be done to enhance access. That's why we also strengthened Bill 231 by requiring that all polling places be accessible to people with disabilities. We know that people with disabilities require greater transparency and more accountability, and that additional opportunities for input are necessary. That's why the Chief Electoral Officer would be required to publish proposed voting locations six months in advance of a scheduled general election and invite public comment on those locations. This would allow members of the public, particularly electors with disabilities, to provide input before any final decisions are made about

where to locate polling places. After every election, the Chief Electoral Officer would also be required to report about the steps taken to ensure accessible, barrier-free elections in Ontario. All reports and election-related materials provided by the Chief Electoral Officer must be made available to people with disabilities in an accessible format. This bill would provide more opportunities than ever before for people with disabilities in this province to participate in the voting process and to offer their advice and input about how to make elections work better for everyone here in this province.

0910

There are some other changes in the voting process that I'd also like to touch on in my remarks this morning. The bill would improve access as well as convenience for all electors through the introduction of special ballots. Special ballots can be cast, for example, through the mail. People with disabilities would be given the option of requesting that election officers make a home visit to assist with the special ballot application and with voting.

But special ballots would not only enhance voting options for people with disabilities; they would also enhance voting options for a broad range of Ontarians who are unable to vote on election day or in person during the election period. By permitting special ballots, people such as snowbirds, who go back and forth to the warmer climates in the winter, senior citizens, and military personnel, who are often out of the country, out of the jurisdiction, would also benefit. Voting should be quicker, more convenient and more efficient for everyone.

An important feature of the bill is that the Chief Electoral Officer would be allowed to modify the voting process and to streamline the voting process at polling locations. In addition, the Chief Electoral Officer would be given the flexibility to determine the hours and dates for advance polls, to better deal with local needs. This was an issue that the select committee heard quite a lot about. Ontario is a vast and complex province. The practicalities of voting are quite different in downtown Toronto, in the suburban GTA, in the Far North and in the aboriginal communities, so the ability of the Chief Electoral Officer to take into account those practical local challenges is an important piece in this legislation.

We also want to encourage our young people to get involved early, to vote early, as soon as they're able to, and to establish that pattern of participating in the voting process, so it's important that voting is not made to be unnecessarily or unfairly inconvenient for young people simply because they are away at a college, university or other training facility. That is why post-secondary students will be allowed to choose whether they want to vote in the electoral district where they are attending for their education and training or where they reside permanently, typically with their parents. This was also something that we heard quite a lot about. Often, a student studying here in Toronto who lives in northwestern Ontario is keenly aware of the issues in northwestern Ontario where he or she has grown up, where their family

lives, and wants to vote there rather than in the GTA, where they're temporarily a resident. This is a fair way to deal with that concern.

As I mentioned earlier, these initiatives are supported by measures that ensure the integrity of our election system, that ensure that it remains strong. I just want to touch on a few of those.

Under the heading of professionalization, Ontarians need equal and ample opportunities to cast a ballot. They also need election officials who are sufficiently experienced and appropriately qualified. That is why this bill will depoliticize the appointments of returning officers and poll workers. This is a big change. This includes eliminating the existing requirement that poll workers be appointed from lists provided by candidates.

This bill would also establish a new authority for the Chief Electoral Officer over appointments and remuneration of election officials so that these officials are more directly accountable. The Chief Electoral Officer would be permitted flexibility to establish fees, including wage levels for election workers. This would better ensure that election officials are sufficiently experienced and appropriately qualified. It would also reduce delays in staffing and training poll workers. What we're doing is professionalizing the people who are responsible for servicing and working with the voters as they cast their ballots.

With responsibility, of course, comes accountability. So the legislation would also modernize the Chief Electoral Officer's financial accountability for election funding. The Chief Electoral Officer would make an annual submission to the Board of Internal Economy where he would establish fees for election officials. The board would have the authority to accept, reject or modify these proposed fees.

Let me say something about modernizing election financing—and this is a very important aspect of this bill. We are mindful that changes to modernize Ontario's election finance rules need to be made. That is why we are introducing more convenient contribution options that reflect modern banking practices and emerging transaction technologies. Bill 231 would bring us into the 21st century by allowing the use of corporate credit cards, debit cards, online contributions and electronic transfers. We have also put forward rules requiring larger parties to develop their own electronic receipting and contribution systems. This would allow parties to centrally manage the issuing of their own receipts instead of relying on the receipt forms provided by Elections Ontario. In the future, parties would be able to provide receipts in a manner and in a format that is convenient and easy to manage. As of June 1, 2012, larger political parties would be required to develop an electronic database and receipting system that has been approved by the Chief Electoral Officer. Smaller parties will be able to opt in if they wish. These changes to election finance rules are all about modernizing the system, a system that currently inconveniences some Ontarians who want to get involved in the election process by contributing to a political party or a candidate.

Let me say in conclusion that overall, this bill is the answer to one simple question, and that question is, how can we make Ontario's election process work better for everyone? We have listened carefully to people with disabilities. We are taking significant steps to make Ontario a leader in Canada to make elections accessible. We have developed a variety of options that would make voting more convenient for electors throughout the province and those temporarily living abroad or out of the jurisdiction. We've introduced changes to Ontario's election finance system to bring us into the 21st century.

We have considered thoughtfully the implications of all of the changes that have been proposed, and we have identified appropriate safeguards to ensure security and integrity of the election process. I'm confident that Bill 231 would make the election process work better for all Ontarians, and I encourage members of this House to support it enthusiastically, as I do.

In closing: I had the privilege of sitting on the select committee on election reform, chaired by Mr. Sorbara; Mr. Sterling sat on it and Mr. Kormos sat on it. I want to thank everyone for the contributions they made to the work of that select committee, which served as the basis for Bill 231.

0920

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to have a chance to comment on Bill 231 and the speech made this morning. I think our party is in support of this bill, although we see that it's missing one big part that the member for Mississippi Mills pointed out in his report, and that is that it doesn't deal with third party advertising. The government is taking advantage of that, in that they have this Working Families Coalition spending millions of dollars in third party advertising and it's not being covered by this bill. That is a huge, glaring error or omission. However, there are aspects of it, and changes at committee, that are positive. I did sit in on some of the committee hearings and I know that many from the disability community expressed that the easiest way for them to vote is via telephone or Internet, and I believe there was an amendment put forward by our critic at committee. I'm pleased to see that there is an option to go forward to bring about alternative voting methods. As has been pointed out, there first of all has to be a by-election, security issues have to be addressed, there needs to be more consultation and then there has to be approval after by a committee of the Legislature. This seems like a reasonable process to put safeguards into effect but that will still in the future allow the easiest way for those who are disabled to be able to vote. I think all parties want to encourage and make it easier for all people to take advantage of and participate in elections. So we're supportive of this bill, Bill 231, with the exception of the fact of that huge omission of missing third party advertising.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments.

Mr. Peter Kormos: The critic in this area for the NDP, Michael Prue, the member from Beaches-East

York, will be speaking in due course to this bill. He had the pleasure of working with Mr. Zimmer, the parliamentary assistant, while this bill was in committee.

Mr. Zimmer is quite right that I was with him on the Sorbara committee. I was not there in my own right; I was there on behalf of Howard Hampton, who was the committee member. I subbed in for him during the course of the whole committee. I commend Mr. Zimmer, the parliamentary assistant, for his patience with these matters. The Attorney General gives him stuff like the election reform stuff. He gives him stuff like the accounting act, which we're visiting this Thursday in clause-by-clause. Who gets the sexy stuff? The Attorney General keeps it for himself. The stuff that has any prospect of spotlights and TV cameras and media coverage he gets for himself, and Zimmer is compelled to make clandestine early-morning phone calls to Andy Barrie to get done what he wants to get done.

But I commend the parliamentary assistant for his work on these things and I just want to tell you that he is a delight to work with. He's intelligent, he's articulate, he puts forward a rational argument—he is just such an unusual government member. And for the life of me, he's the best cabinet minister that this province never had. I can't do enough—I suppose I've probably done too much already since Mr. Zimmer's election, trying to get him into cabinet, and I'm not sure that we haven't reached that point where the rate of return has started to diminish, but I'll continue to make best effort in that regard and use every capacity that I can muster to ensure that David Zimmer gets the profile that he deserves, because he surely, truly deserves it.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions.

Mr. Pat Hoy: I'm pleased to make a few comments as we begin third reading on An Act to amend the Election Act and the Election Finances Act. I too think that Mr. Zimmer, the parliamentary assistant, did an excellent job of giving an overview of what this legislation means at this point, having come back here for third reading, with all the consultations having been completed, and what we call clause-by-clause. I'm pleased to hear from across the way that there is general support for this bill. It's one that legislators should and do take seriously, because after all, we are the subject of the voting rights that people enjoy. Every four years here in Ontario, in October, we are up for what I call review. It's important that people have fairness in how they go about the process of casting their vote, accessibility, understanding what their rights are, where the voting places will be, what day etc. The Chief Electoral Officer has some other powers here to ensure that accessibility is fair and in place.

These things that we're talking about within this bill are important to democracy overall. We pride ourselves in what we do as a democracy here in Ontario and indeed in Canada. The voting is part of our definition of democracy, I would think, in that we pride ourselves in how we approach these issues.

Of course, with modern technology and growing populations and the needs of all to be considered, it's

excellent to be here at third reading to see the amendments that are put forth in this legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I came to the House because the member from Willowdale was speaking. He read the notes that were provided for him very thoroughly, I think. Most importantly, I'm listening and waiting for the member from Halton, our critic, who will bring some substance to the concerns that we have.

In fact, I think our finance critic, Mr. Miller, mentioned that we would be supporting the bill but that we want to render a couple of serious concerns. Third party advertising has been—"destructive" would be putting it modestly. I have in front of me a formal document here which is supplied under the elections finance office, and this is from Working Families. What it does is detail the contribution of over \$1 million—\$1,084,904.85—and it attributes this to Alex Lolua, who was the chief financial officer of Working Families. Then it goes on to list, and this is the distressing part of this politicization of this process, to the extent where—there's full accountability; we agree with that. All parties have to file, and all contributions are filed and disclosed. I think what's missing here—these are augmenting, in this case, the Liberal Party war chest for the election. It's right here. It's saying that, for instance, there was \$1.4 million from trade unions; that's what it says. If I look at further detail, it goes on to list the IBEW local union, \$9,000, and \$400,000 from the Ontario Pipe Trades Council.

Now, it's these kinds of contributions that render it unfair to the third party and the opposition. We're for the bill. We're for more transparency. The problem here is this whole disclosure part of third party advertising. It was ignored, and I think that's a mistake in the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Willowdale has two minutes to respond.

Mr. David Zimmer: I thank my colleagues in the Legislature from all parties for their comments.

I was reflecting that there are lots of new things in this bill, lots of things to move us towards the most modern electoral system here in the country. But I suppose one of the most important things for me is the new role of the Chief Electoral Officer. In the past, it has sort of been a hodgepodge of who's supervising whom in the electoral process, who's supervising returning officers, who's hiring returning officers, how polling stations are set up and all of those issues. The result has been that throughout the province, I think it was fair to say and we'd all recognize, the voting process, in subtle ways and sometimes not-so-subtle ways, was sort of different in Toronto, different in the Far North, different in rural Ontario. The single most important thing we've done is vest new authority in the Chief Electoral Officer to manage, in an overall way, the electoral process. We've delegated real authority to him to do the hiring of the people involved in administering elections in Ontario, to set their wage rates, to supervise them—hiring, firing, discipline and quality control, if you will. We have reached a whole

new level of professionalization and quality control by vesting the authority to do so in the hands of the Chief Electoral Officer. That is a big—

0930

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I'd also say that you have tied the Chief Electoral Officer's hands in a very significant way by not passing many amendments that you could have passed in this act, ignoring the elephant in the room, as it were, with third party advertising. I'll have more to say on that as we go forward.

This bill, as it went to committee, became very contentious. The disabled community was very eager to have a number of amendments passed and to have a great deal more accessibility to polls. We all read with alarm and distaste about the plight of some handicapped people in elections and by-elections in Ontario where the polling station was at first judged to be accessible and then, through the experience of handicapped people in visiting that poll, it was found to be very inaccessible.

Each poll was judged after the election or by-election as to whether it was accessible or not. Some of the criteria that were used for that judging were way out of date and didn't take into consideration the handicapped people who had to use it. Indeed, the consultations with the handicapped community were sadly lacking. Some of those things were addressed in this bill, and certainly many of them were improved through amendments.

The government had not initially thought of those circumstances that handicapped people would find themselves in. It's amazing to me that the discussion on handicapped access to polling stations wasn't considered until after the bill got into committee. It certainly wasn't discussed or considered when the bill was being drafted, because so many of the amendments dealt with accessibility issues.

The result was that there were a huge number of amendments, many of which were accepted. I think that the PC Party set a personal-best record with having eight amendments accepted by the government, none of which, of course, dealt with third party advertising, but which did deal with accessibility items such as the review of polling stations' accessibility by handicapped people following the election. That report would go to the Chief Electoral Officer, and following every election that we have, if those reports are listened to and read, the system that we have should improve itself over time so that, as we proceed, it will continue to get better and better as far as accessibility is concerned for handicapped people.

This bill, when it went to committee, did not contain any legislation that would allow the use of telephones or electronic equipment by handicapped people or indeed the general public. Through, I believe, a six- or seven-page amendment that the government introduced, that was corrected. I would like to think that that amendment was introduced because of a similar amendment that our party put in that found large acceptance by the handicapped community. I think the government was more or

less forced to bring in that piece of legislation, that amendment, that opened up some of the aspects to allow for very private and personal voting by handicapped people. I think it was a good thing that the government brought that forward eventually and passed it. I think that made this bill a better bill than it was initially. Certainly, the hearings that the government went through were not necessarily reflected in the legislation. But by the time the legislation got to the committee level and the amendments began to flow, the bill started to take on a shape that was better than the bill that was introduced for first reading some months prior to that.

There was some serious concern, some debate, between the government and our party concerning the facilities around post-secondary students and where they would vote. We felt quite strongly that the post-secondary student who was involved in a community in Ontario and had lived and grown up in that community might be more aware of the political situation that that community faced and might wish to cast his ballot in that community. The government, on the other hand, wished to make it as easy as possible for that student to cast his ballot where he was living in the university or college town, or living away from home. I think there's a certain political concern in that area when you get such a large block of votes in one particular area that might, indeed, be single-issue voters who might not necessarily reflect the needs or the wants of the larger community or the larger riding that was involved in that particular issue.

One of the most interesting parts of this bill was the report that was put in by Mr. Greg Essensa, the Chief Electoral Officer. He submitted a report back on May 7, 2009. His report went to the Select Committee on Elections. I'd like to quote from his report. I'm going to read most of it, I think. I'm going to make some comments about it as well, because I think it's an excellent report that the government should have listened to in much greater detail than apparently turned out when they produced this Bill 231.

He appeared before the committee in December 2008 and he recommended that the advertising provisions of the Election Finances Act be reviewed. "The law was drafted over 30 years ago," he says, "and the way in which campaigns are run has significantly changed. In February, my written submission recommended that a task force be created to review the rules governing political advertising." The task force was developed but it was much broader than just the political advertising aspect that the Chief Electoral Officer had suggested. He said, "Today I would like to focus on one aspect of political advertising, specifically third party advertising. I will address three topics in my presentation: first, the third party advertising requirement in the Elections Finances Act; second, questions the select committee may wish to consider with respect to the regulation of third party advertising"—and that's a very interesting part of the report—"and third, the role of the Chief Electoral Officer in administering the election finances process." He suggests he'd be happy to answer any questions at the end of his presentation.

"To begin with, it's important to remember that apart from parties and candidates, there are individuals and organizations who participate in the democratic process. These third parties participate in elections by commenting on a candidate or party's position, adding issues into the political debate in an election, and attempting to influence which parties or candidates are elected."

They're taking part in this election process in a very similar fashion as a political party, either the Liberals, the Conservatives, the NDP, the Green Party, the Family Coalition Party—the Rhinoceros Party, for that matter—the same way in which those parties are taking part in an election, so too is a so-called third party advertiser, in that they are trying to get their specific position, their specific wants, needs or philosophy, across to the general public during that election process.

0940

The Chief Electoral Officer goes on to say: "Third parties participate in the democratic process by sponsoring advertising, the same way as candidates and parties. They advertise before and during campaigns to deliver a message about a particular issue or about the merits of a specific party or candidate. Third party advertising has been present in the democratic process in Canada for quite some time. As early as the 1970s, on the recommendation of a royal commission, Parliament—the Parliament of Canada—"amended the Canada Elections Act to include controls over third party advertisers."

Why would they do that? We have control over the amount of money that the Liberal Party of Ontario can spend in a general election. We have control over the amount of money that an individual candidate can spend in a general election. These controls on how much money parties and individuals can spend are very important to the democratic process. It's important to the democratic process in that money cannot buy an election, and I think we would all agree that that is not the way a democratic process should take place. Yet here we have a third party advertiser who has the same logical position as a party or a candidate, and there are no controls over their spending habits or amounts anywhere in the Election Act.

I think that is a real concern and one that has been expressed by the Chief Electoral Officer. It has been expressed by a number of people in Ontario. And here we have a bill, Bill 231, which went through the House. It went through debate. This issue was raised time and again during that debate. And this government refused to acknowledge that the elections in Ontario are not fair and impartial when one sector has unlimited funding to promote their thoughts and ideas, while all other sectors in the electorate do not have that same advantage, and indeed are restricted—severely restricted, in some cases—as to how much money they can spend, and when and where they can spend it.

The Chief Electoral Officer goes on to say that he would like to turn his attention to the first topic, the third party advertising requirements in the Election Finances Act: "As members of the committee will remember, there were various changes made to Ontario's election laws in

June before the October 2007 general election. Those changes included new third party registration and reporting requirements. At the time these changes were made, there were only three Canadian jurisdictions that had such requirements: They were in place federally—so the federal Parliament of Canada had them—“in Quebec and in British Columbia. It should not be forgotten, however, that the Election Finances Act already contained some restrictions on third party advertising dating back to 1998. The law already imposed blackouts on third party political advertising on polling day and the day before polling day, and deemed that \$100 or more spent on advertising by a person, corporation or trade union which promoted a party or candidate was to be treated as a contribution, provided it was done with the knowledge and consent of that party or candidate. In essence, the law required for several years that third party advertising be treated as a contribution if it could be shown to be controlled by a political party or candidate. The cost of such advertising was also subject to contribution limits and treated as a campaign expense of the party or candidate.”

These are all very fair, equitable regulations. The inequity comes when the third party advertising is not part and parcel of a party's platform or campaign efforts and operates outside any political party's contribution ceilings or limits. That's where the inequity comes from. It's unfair that one portion of the Election Finances Act is ignored, or can be ignored, completely by one aspect of people who are trying to influence the outcome of an election in Ontario.

The legislation that was passed in June 2007 contained the following significant requirements: “Third party advertisers spending over \$500 on election advertising had to register with the Chief Electoral Officer”—that's in Ontario; “all registered third party advertisers had to report on their advertising spending six months after the election; and third party advertisers had to report all contributions they received to support their advertising during the campaign period and in the two months before the election was called.”

Now there's a very serious problem in the legislation in that the third party advertisers only had to report money they collected two months prior to an election. In Ontario, that would be somewhere around July 4, 5, 6 to September 4, 5, 6, depending on when the election day is and the day the writ was dropped. It would be in that first week in September, and that gives them two months now.

It's known in Ontario that one particular third party advertiser, the Working Families of Ontario, collects money for the four-year period in between the elections. In fact, Working Families could very easily have a campaign chest that exceeds what the Liberals are allowed to spend in the next provincial election and what the Conservatives are allowed to spend. Those are the two largest spending entities in elections—they have been—in the history of Ontario. In this next election, we could see in excess of \$10 million spent on advertising by the Working Families Coalition; \$10 million can

seriously tilt the outcome of an election, and that is eminently unfair to all parties, to anybody who is concerned about democracy. This government ignored that issue while putting this bill through the House.

These provisions are similar to federal third party provisions, with the exception that the amendments did not impose any spending limits. Whether you're a candidate or a political party, you have spending limits as to how much money you can accept from one individual or from one corporation. The spending limit for an individual candidate is somewhere in the \$1,100 area. You cannot contribute more than that, from an individual or a corporation, to an individual candidate. You cannot contribute more than—I'm not sure what the party max is, but it's somewhere in the \$3,000 or \$4,000 range. Perhaps someone could help me with that, but it's somewhere in that ballpark, where a political party cannot receive more than that from one individual. I think that's good. That limits the ability for a party or a candidate to buy an election. I think it would be undemocratic for money to play a disproportionate role in swaying an election one way or another, and that's exactly what we're talking about with third party advertising, which has no limit on it whatsoever.

“In support of these new requirements, my predecessor”—this is a Chief Electoral Officer speaking—“issued new guidelines, which attempted to clarify for third parties, candidates and political parties alike how these new rules worked. These guidelines attempted to address, for instance, how to differentiate between issue-based advertising that would not be subject to these requirements and advertising promoting or opposing a particular party or candidate that would be subject to these requirements.”

They tried to clarify this within the standing act, and as Chief Electoral Officer, he found it very difficult to do; therefore, he is asking the government to have a review of this situation. As Chief Electoral Officer, he can't tell the government what to do, but he can suggest, in the strongest of terms, which I believe he is doing in this paper, that the government review this situation and include some new guidelines or some new rules around third party advertising and how and where it can take place during an election, and this government ignored those recommendations entirely.

0950

The Chief Electoral Officer goes on to say, “I think it can be said, in fairness to all, that implementing a new system on the eve of a general election”—this is back in 2007—“posed significant challenges for Elections Ontario and for those involved in the electoral process. I will have more to say about how ... I intend to address these challenges in the last part of my presentation.” This took place in 2007, of course, on the eve of the election of October 2007 but his call for a committee to look into the Election Finances Act was to carry on into the next Parliament and to make those recommendations on a go-forward basis.

He goes on to say, “In light of Ontario's recent experience with third party advertising requirements, I

would like to address my second topic, and that is, questions that the select committee”—the proposed select committee—“may wish to consider with respect to the regulation of third party advertising. I began my presentation today by noting that it is time for a comprehensive review of the political finance rules in Ontario. This review is certainly timely with respect to third party advertising requirements,” since third party requirements had been used in a new way, in a way in which they had not been used before. In particular, they had been used with a massive amount of money behind them. In the 2007 election they spent at least \$2 million, and we don't know what the total was because they were collecting money long before the two-month requirement to register that money. So how much money they collected before that is unknown. How much money they spent during the election writ period, how much money they spent prior to the election writ period is unknown. There are estimates that I've heard that are as high as \$5 million, or about half of what both major political parties in Ontario spent, and probably about the same as what the NDP spent as a political party in Ontario. When a third party advertiser is able to get to that level of expenditure in a totally unregulated way, I think everyone can see that it could and probably does have an effect on the outcome of the election. Without some fiscal controls on that, that is wrong in a democratic process—and this government ignored that.

The Chief Electoral Officer goes on to say, “Since changes were made to the Election Finances Act in 2007, two more provinces, New Brunswick and Alberta, have either adopted or proposed to adopt controls over third party advertisers, and BC has substantially amended its third party requirements.

“Now that the legislation is over and the reports have been submitted, and taking into account the innovations being introduced in other jurisdictions, there are a number of areas the Select Committee on Elections may wish to examine. Some of these include:

“First, should Ontario adopt third party spending limits? Currently, Ontario has no spending limits” for third parties. “In comparison, there are third party election advertising limits in other jurisdictions. Federally, a third party is limited to spending \$183,300 in total and no more than \$3,666 in any one electoral jurisdiction.” As an aside, I kind of wonder where they came up with those numbers, but there you have it. “In British Columbia, a third party is limited to spending \$150,000 in total and no more than \$3,000 in any one electoral district. In New Brunswick, a third party is limited to spending no more than 1.3% of the maximum amount a political party can spend if it runs a candidate....” To put that in context, a candidate in New Brunswick can probably spend somewhere in the order of \$60,000 to \$80,000, depending on what the population of his riding is. I think they get 96 cents per elector that they can spend as the limit, and so 1.3% of the maximum amount a political party could spend would be somewhere in the order of \$1,500, I would think, per riding. “In Quebec, a thirty party is

limited to spending \$300 on issue advertising, and third parties may not advertise to directly promote a party or candidate.” Quebec has certainly the most restrictive controls over third party spending. I'm not sure I'd want to see Ontario go that far.

“The second area of consideration is, should Ontario adopt third party contribution limits?” The first was spending limits, this is contribution limits. “Currently, no jurisdiction has contribution limits, but Alberta has introduced a bill, Bill 205, that would limit a contributor to giving a third party for its advertising no more than \$30,000 in an election year and no more than \$15,000 in a non-election year.” That would limit their contributions significantly from the current levels that exist in Ontario.

To continue on a second point, the Chief Electoral Officer goes on to say that “regarding issues that the select committee may wish to take into consideration respecting” third party advertising, “Should Ontario try to limit third party advertising spending to the amounts it raises prior to and during an election?” In reading the Chief Electoral Officer's report, I think it's important to note that he treads a very delicate line. He's very much aware that when you put financial controls in place on third parties, or on anyone else, you have the ability or you have the danger of affecting democracy. Certainly, there should be a mechanism whereby third parties can make their viewpoints known, talk about their philosophies, get those kinds of things out into the political arena so that a fair and equitable discussion can take place. I believe that's where the Chief Electoral Officer is going. That whole debate was ignored by this government when it brought in Bill 231.

“Currently, a registered third party need only report on the contributions it receives to support its advertising in the two months before an election is called. This allows third parties to build advertising war chests but not have to report on the source of those contributions received at an earlier time.” As I mentioned earlier, this is certainly an inequitable situation, and it cannot be considered fair when you consider that a third party should have some restrictions placed on it in a similar vein to what other political parties have placed on them. They shouldn't be able to go down the road without controls while the mainstream political parties, the three that have representatives in this House, and the six or eight—I believe there are 26 registered parties in Ontario, or 27; I think I heard in the news coming in today there was a 28th one just registered—but those parties should all have the same access to funds and access to the limits that all parties in Ontario share.

“In 2006, there was a bill before Parliament”—the Canadian Parliament—“that proposed to limit third party advertising spending to the amounts donated and reported in the six months before an election. While Bill C-79 died on the order paper, this is a requirement that legislators in Ontario may wish to consider.”

The Chief Electoral Officer continues to push forward his concerns about third party advertising, and he keeps asking the government, “You may wish to consider;” that

phrase is repeated many, many times. Given the fact that the Chief Electoral Officer is an officer of this Legislature, he cannot direct the government to do anything, but he is repeatedly asking the government to do something—to the point of pleading for the government to do something—on this issue which he sees as a serious affront to the democratic process in the province of Ontario.

“The fourth public policy area for consideration” could be, “should Ontario adopt stricter registration and anti-collusion provisions? Under the Election Finances Act, there is no specific provision that prohibits a third party from co-operating or coordinating its advertising with either a political party or one of its candidates, provided that the party/candidate is not actually controlling the third party’s advertising. Such advertising is not necessarily prohibited so long as the cost of the advertising does not exceed the contribution limits and is reported by the party/candidate as an expense.”

1000

Herein lies the problem with third party advertising that we have in Ontario. They are coordinating and co-operating—the Working Families Coalition, which is a coalition of a number of unions, including teachers’ unions and construction unions. It would appear that they are co-operating and coordinating with the Liberal Party, but they are not admitting that they’re doing so. Therefore, their contributions, their advertising and their costs in elections are not included in the Liberal Party’s maximums, in the number of—

Interjection.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Pardon me?

Mr. Peter Shurman: Connect the dots.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: The member from Thornhill says, “Connect the dots.” It’s easy to figure out. Connecting the dots becomes a little easier when you see that the executive directors of the Working Families Coalition contain the same names as many of the directors who sit on the Liberal Party of Ontario. It’s a fine line that separates it and it’s one that distorts the election process and allows the Liberals to double their expenditures over and above what the regulations allow them to do during an election. That’s a dangerous thing for democracy in this province.

The Election Finances Act has no specific connection between what prohibits a third party from co-operating or coordinating its advertising with other provincial parties. “Such advertising is not necessarily prohibited so long as the cost of the advertising does not exceed the contribution limits,” which is my main concern.

“Similarly, with the absence of spending limits in Ontario, there are also no explicit prohibitions on third parties coordinating their activities with one another.” When we look at the makeup of the Working Families Coalition, for instance, there are eight, 10, 12 people—organizations—who are contributing money to that organization. There is nothing to say that they shouldn’t be able to do that, but they should be able to do that only under the same conditions as all other political parties in Ontario find themselves faced with when it comes to

raising funds and operating in Ontario under Ontario regulations.

“In contrast, more stringent requirements are in place federally, in British Columbia, in New Brunswick, in Quebec, and are being proposed in Alberta. It is, or will be, an offence in these jurisdictions to collude for the purposes of circumventing spending limits for political parties, candidates and third parties.” I believe those same regulations should apply in Ontario.

“These are significant questions, and there may be” many “others.” The Chief Electoral Officer says, “I do not have the answers to these questions.” I think he has a pretty good idea of which direction he’d like to see it go in. He doesn’t have a particular policy recommendation to make to you. “As the Chief Electoral Officer, that is not my place.” If you read between the lines, I think he would say, “I wish it was my place, because I think this should be fixed, and I’d like to see it fixed. Therefore, please put it in the recommendations of the committee.” But he goes on to say, “But I do see that these are important issues that other jurisdictions have turned their minds to, and recommend that Ontario do the same.” I think that comes as close as the Chief Electoral Officer can come to asking the government to place some regulations in Bill 231—the bill that has now moved into third reading—and fix the problem that is facing Ontario.

He goes on to say, “I had such examples in mind when I recommended in December and in February that a task force be created to examine the rules of political financing in Ontario.” He’s trying to get the government’s attention.

“Finally, I have not just come here today to suggest things that this committee and the Legislative Assembly can do. As I mentioned earlier, I have a few thoughts with respect to the role of the Chief Electoral Officer in administering the election finance process. While I am not new to the world of elections, I am new to the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer. It is incumbent on me to ensure that I administer Ontario’s elections finance laws in a fair and impartial manner.”

Again, reading between the lines, the Chief Electoral Officer seems to have some frustration that the regulations in place in Ontario do not allow him to administer elections in a fair and impartial manner. This government had the opportunity to change that. This government had the opportunity to promote democracy. This government failed to do that.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: I stand to commend the member from Halton, who has just spoken, but I am somewhat puzzled because I did hear in the body of the debate and I did hear from some of the people doing questions and comments earlier that the Conservative Party will be supporting this bill. After listening to the member from Halton—who was really quite articulate. He pointed out all the huge failures in this bill: the lack of any kind of concrete action towards the disabled; the weak, ineffective law; the third party spending limits that were

not going to be honoured; the continuing reliance on donations; he didn't talk about this, but there's also the leaving out of advertising and third party advertising in municipal elections—all of the things that were wrong, all of the things that the Conservative Party in committee tried to fix. The government was having no part of it.

Then I listened to him and I listened to his colleagues, and it seems to me that in spite of the many flaws of this bill, they are prepared to support it. Perhaps when the member gets an opportunity in his two minutes at the end, he could indicate why, if this bill is so wrong, as his careful analysis has shown that so many things that could and should have been done have not been done, he is in fact supporting the bill. It would seem illogical to me that any bill that will continue to allow third party advertising and have no third party spending limits, which is the crux of his argument today of what is wrong with the bill—why he would be supporting that to allow that continuing inequity to take place. I am absolutely puzzled as to why he and his colleagues will be supporting this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

Mr. David Zimmer: I particularly want to respond to the comments of the member for Halton, Mr. Chudleigh. He spoke at length in his remarks about some of the flaws that he saw in the bill. He particularly addressed and spoke strongly, if not passionately, to the issue of third party finance. We listened carefully to everything that he said. Third party financing is something that he's very, very upset that—when you listen to what he said today—was not addressed in the bill.

To paraphrase Shakespeare and referencing Lady Macbeth and, "The lady doth protest too much," I think the member doth protest too much here because the Progressive Conservative Party and Mr. Chudleigh, the member for Halton, sat in clause-by-clause as we went through the bill. The Progressive Conservatives put forth some 40 amendments to the bill in committee—40 amendments. That's a great stack of amendments. They wanted to amend this, that and the other thing—a comprehensive amendment package. We were happy to support a number of their amendments; I believe we supported seven. But the interesting thing is, not one of the Progressive Conservatives' 40 amendments addressed the issue of third party financing. Now, talk about a conflict: The member for Halton sitting here used up a good chunk of his speech complaining about third party financing, yet at clause-by-clause, not one—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member for Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington.

1010

Mr. Randy Hillier: The Election Act—we all recognize how important it is and why we have an independent officer of Parliament as the Chief Electoral Officer. We all recognize that that Election Act is to prevent the fixing of elections. The Chief Electoral Officer recommended strongly that we have guidelines about third party financing to prevent collusion and collaboration between invisible agents and political parties.

The Conservative Party recognizes, and so does everybody else, that the Working Families Coalition is spending and contributing millions and millions of dollars to the Liberal Party. The Liberals are using trade unions, the building trade unions especially, as a proxy political party. They had an opportunity to close this loophole within the Election Act—this gaping loophole, one that the Chief Electoral Officer exposed completely—and they failed to act. They want this loophole to stay there. They want this unseen appendage, the Working Families Coalition, to continue to raise and contribute money outside of the Election Act.

What we're looking for is disclosure and accountability. We want third parties to be active in the democratic process, but they need to be open, they need to disclose and they need to be accountable. Had third party financing been included in this act, you would have seen many amendments by our party in there, but you prevented it by not having it in the act in the first place.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Parkdale-High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It is a pleasure to stand up and say a few words about this, certainly following on the heels of the member from Halton. Yes, he's right: There needs to be more transparency about third party contributions. Also, our friend from Willowdale is right: Unfortunately, the Progressive Conservatives didn't put forward any amendments to that end. We, however, in the New Democratic Party, put forward over 30 amendments that would actually assist those in the disability community and disability rights community, none of which the government acceded to—in fact, in full view of those who were there as stakeholders. That is a real focus, and that's something that my colleague from Beaches-East York will be focusing on when his time comes to stand and speak about the bill.

Those who are viewing should also know that we in the New Democratic Party would like to ban contributions from corporations and unions. That's our party position. There's significant work to be done about transparency in the election laws in Ontario and, unfortunately, on a number of fronts this bill just doesn't do what's necessary. It doesn't really do what's required to amend our election laws. Like so many Liberal bills, it fiddles around the edges but does nothing, really, to the substance of the issue and the substance of the problems. One is to make elections more accessible to those who have disabilities; the other is to look at where contributions come from and to be really open and transparent about that.

It's sad to see the member from Halton rise and speak so eloquently and then, of course, unfortunately it looks like the Progressive Conservatives are going to support this bill. So I'm looking forward to my colleague's comments. They may not come at this time, but suffice it to say that we need election reform in this province and this bill won't do it.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Halton has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I'd like to thank the members for their comments. From the former mayor of East York and his riding, whatever that is—

Mr. Michael Prue: Beaches—East York.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Beaches—East York, yes. Why are we supporting this bill, having railed against it for 45 minutes? I railed against what's not in the bill. The bill itself does improve the election process, in particular for handicapped people, and it's worth supporting on that basis. The bill could have been so much better, especially when you talk about the ability for this bill to improve the democratic process in Ontario.

To miss that opportunity—this Election Act doesn't get opened up all that often. It's 10, 12, 15 or 20 years sometimes between acts opening up. With this bill, you missed an opportunity that would have helped democracy in Ontario, and when you look back on your years in this House you will look at that one omission and you will say, "We missed an opportunity to do a better job for the people of Ontario," and that is a sad thing.

Secondly, I'm surprised that the member for Willowdale wouldn't know that when you put in an amendment to a bill, there has to be a clause for you to amend. There was no clause on third party advertising in this entire bill, so there was no clause for us to amend, and that's why there were no amendments that we put in regarding that. I'm surprised that the member for Willowdale, who is a lawyer and tells everybody he's a lawyer at every opportunity, wouldn't know that.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. It being close to 10:15, this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1016 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I'd like to introduce some guests we have this morning: the family of page Georgina Hadjiyianni. Here this morning are her parents, Mary and Nick Hadjiyianni; her grandparents Andreas and Georgia Hadjiyianni; and her sister Paulina. Welcome.

Mr. Bruce Crozier: I would like the members to join me in welcoming two of my guests who are in the members' east gallery: Plinio and Anna Paula from Rio, Brazil. Welcome.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's my pleasure to welcome several members of the Oakville provincial youth advisory committee. With us today are Lucas Burton, Erin Nieweglowski, Franziska Miller, Kevin O'Hare, Sara Pezzack, Natalie Djurdjev, Laura McVey, and Ellen Kuschnik from my constituency office.

Mr. Paul Miller: Shortly joining us will be Leanne Siracusa of the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario; Sally Palmer from the Campaign for Adequate Welfare and Disability Benefits; Stephanie Chapman, on behalf of her mother, who is an ODSP recipient; and

Amy MacPherson, a single parent on ODSP. Many others will be in front of Queen's Park today.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I would like to welcome the grade 10 students from école Gabriel-Dumont in London to the Legislature this morning. Bienvenue à toutes et tous.

Mr. David Zimmer: I would like to welcome today Mr. Fazal Khan, who is the president of the college of opticians; and Caroline MacIsaac-Power, who is the registrar. They're over here. The college represents Ontario's 2,500 practising opticians. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like the members to join me in welcoming two guests of mine in the Speaker's gallery, Dr. Andy Ballard and Gail Ballard from the great riding of Elgin—Middlesex—London, who are here to observe the proceedings today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

ORAL QUESTIONS

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. Tim Hudak: In the absence of the Premier for the second consecutive day after his—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I remind the honourable member that we have an understanding here: We do not make references to the attendance of members.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Thank you, Speaker. My question is for the—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): That didn't take long: 24 seconds into question period. Members will please come to order.

Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Acting Premier. Premier McGuinty's ill-conceived plan to teach sex ed to six-year-olds is not the first time we saw him ignore Ontario families and take this Dalton-knows-best approach. Dalton McGuinty is also turning many Ontario communities into guinea pigs for his industrial wind farm schemes. And then he arrogantly dismisses any concerns from local families or municipal leaders about what this means for their neighbourhoods.

I ask the Deputy Premier: What makes Dalton McGuinty think he can cut local governments and families out of planning decisions when it comes to his industrial wind farm schemes?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: To the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure, please.

Hon. Brad Duguid: We all know very well that your party is opposed to moving forward on the advance of renewables. We know that you would do anything you can to delay that so your love affair with coal can continue. I'm going to tell you right now, your love affair with coal is over, absolutely over.

There are numerous opportunities for public input and involvement in renewable project planning. In fact, the

proponent of the project must consult with the municipality and the community. Their concerns must be documented in their application and must indicate how the proponent is addressing these issues and concerns. Following their submission to the Ministry of the Environment, the application is posted on the Environmental Bill of Rights for 30 to 60 days. There's a good process in place. It cuts out the red tape and delay—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Unlike Dalton McGuinty, who thinks he can sit in his office and decide where the industrial wind farm schemes go, the Ontario PCs believe in a fair price for the ratepayer and local decision-making on these projects. Minister, your Premier once said that municipalities were a mature, responsible level of government and they have their own duly elected representatives. Yet when it comes to local input on your industrial wind farm schemes, only Dalton knows best. We firmly disagree. Municipalities actually have a say over where to put a shopping mall, but you've stripped away their ability on these industrial wind farm schemes that could be the size of 25 shopping malls. Minister, why did Dalton McGuinty say he respects municipalities when clearly he's doing the complete opposite?

Hon. Brad Duguid: There they go again, saying one thing one day and another the next. One day they're against red tape; today they want more red tape to delay very important energy projects and the 50,000 jobs that the Green Energy Act will bring. One day they're for investments in our economy; now they're against—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will please come to order.

Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: One day they talk about being for investment in our economy; the next day they talk about the \$7 billion in private sector dollars flowing into this province from Samsung. One day they're complaining about not enough jobs being created; the next day they're opposed to the 16,000 jobs coming from Samsung, and the 20,000 jobs coming from the \$9-billion investment we recently announced in renewable energies.

We know they oppose our efforts to transition our energy sector to cleaner sources of energy. We know they want to stick with coal, but—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

1040

Mr. Tim Hudak: We saw this past week the same Dalton-knows-best routine that saw Minister Papatello call opponents of Dalton McGuinty's plans to teach sex ed to six-year-olds—that those parents were from the Dark Ages. We're similarly seeing you call local municipal representatives and families who object to your industrial wind farm schemes as being part of the Dark Ages. In reality, some 50 municipalities have brought forward resolutions—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The Minister of Economic Development will withdraw the comment she just made.

Interjections.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Some 50 municipalities have brought forward resolutions calling for a moratorium on industrial wind farms until a study is done to investigate fully their health and environmental concerns. The Environmental Commissioner has expressed his concerns as well. What makes Dalton McGuinty so smart? Why does he know better than local municipal leaders and local families?

Hon. Brad Duguid: These Tories are so far behind the times that they're even behind the Harper government when it comes to getting out of coal and moving to renewable energy sources. In a recent article, Environment Minister Jim Prentice has told Canada's major electricity producers that they'll have to gradually retire their coal-fired plants and replace them with cleaner sources of energy. Even the Harper government is ahead of you guys, you're so far behind the world.

The good news for Ontarians is that we're out in front. Our Premier, many years ago, saw this coming, and he's moving us faster than any other jurisdiction in this world to cleaner sources of energy. The result will be building a green energy hub here, creating 50,000 jobs over the next three years, something—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'd remind the Minister of Energy that it was actually Elizabeth Witmer who closed down the only coal plants in the province of Ontario.

Back to the Acting Premier: You know this impacts your riding, and you've dodged answering any of my questions to date. The Ontario PC caucus has brought forward a motion calling for a moratorium on these industrial wind farm projects until an independent study of the health and environmental impacts is done. We're standing on the side of 50-some municipalities that have similarly brought forward resolutions. We are standing on the side of families from Scarborough to Prince Edward county who are calling for this type of moratorium. Minister, I ask you, can we count on your support to stand up for communities like Prince Edward-Hastings, Scarborough Bluffs and Essex and support our motion for—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Acting Premier.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: To the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure.

Hon. Brad Duguid: The member of the opposition should understand that we've brought into place the toughest setback rules on the continent when it comes to wind energy. No wind turbine can be closer to 550 metres to your home unless consented to. This is the toughest setback standard in North America. The Min-

istry of the Environment, under the leadership of our good friend the Minister of the Environment, John Gerretsen, has ensured that literature from around the world has been studied around the world, and they've found that there's no adverse health effects as a result of wind turbines. Under the leadership of the Minister of the Environment, we've appointed an Ontario research chair at the University of Waterloo who will provide guidelines and advice on setting standards. Our chief medical officer of health will be reporting this spring on health effects.

We take these issues very seriously, but we—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Not only do Dalton McGuinty's industrial wind farm schemes ignore what Ontario families want in their communities, they are very expensive as well. They will drive up the cost of energy to Ontario seniors and families. In fact, an independent report says that a \$350-a-year increase in taxes and fees has come about on Ontario family power bills because of your schemes like this and your gross mismanagement of the file. When you add in these industrial wind farms and other so-called projects, families are looking at an additional \$650 a year more on their hydro bills. Minister, are you that out of touch? Don't you understand the struggles families are going through? Will you support our motion before the assembly tomorrow?

Hon. Brad Duguid: If the Leader of the Opposition really cared about families, wouldn't he care about the health of our families, the health of our kids and grandkids, the need for our next generation to inherit clean air from our generation? Wouldn't he want to get off of coal? But his party wants to keep us in the—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Wouldn't the member of the opposition care about ensuring that we protect the health of our kids and grandkids? I know he does. This is the to-and-fro of the Legislature here. He's forgetting about our kids and grandkids and their health.

If he really cares about families, doesn't he realize the need to ensure that we have a stable energy supply in this province, something that we've had to invest in over the last number of years? Under his government, the use of coal plants went up 127%. We've brought it down 70% since we've been in office, the lowest level in—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Of course we care about the financial well-being of Ontario families that are paying these exorbitant increases in their energy bills because of Dalton McGuinty, and we stand with them in calling for a health and environmental review of your wind energy schemes. Quite frankly, I put much more faith in them and their municipal leaders than a Premier widely known for saying one thing and doing the opposite while he has been in office.

Communities want local input on these industrial wind farms in their community. They want to see that in your green energy scheme, the environment will actually win, because right now the environment loses and families lose, businesses lose, municipalities lose. Unless your name is Samsung, everybody loses.

I'll ask the minister again: Will you support our moratorium and show the respect for local governments and families that they deserve?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Seven years ago, we inherited an energy system that had been neglected by the previous government, causing shortages in supply due to lack of investment in the aging infrastructure. Worse than that, it had a terrible reliance on coal that was harming the health of our people. Ontarians deserve better.

Our plan is delivering reliable, clean energy with a mix of emission-free power generation and a commitment to conservation. That's a real plan. Is there a cost to that plan? Yes, there is. But the benefit is cleaner air. The benefit is healthier families. The benefit is a stronger economy; 50,000 new jobs being created as a result of our Green Energy Act.

This province is leading the world when it comes to these technologies. This province is leading the world when it comes to moving in this direction. Ontarians have a lot to be proud of over the last seven years and how far we've come.

NURSES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Minister of Health. Yesterday, the minister argued that all of the 2,000 nursing positions that have been lost across Ontario are simply moving to the community. Can the minister provide us with a breakdown of where exactly these new nursing positions have actually appeared?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm very happy to talk about how much more opportunity nurses have in Ontario now than they did in 2003. As I said yesterday, we have almost 10,000 more nurses working in this province than we did when we took office in 2003. In fact, even in the last year there are 1,000 more nurses working today than just one year ago.

We collect statistics from the college of nurses, from our own ministry, where we fund new nursing positions. I'd be very happy to share the statistics from the college of nurses, from the ministry, with the member opposite.

What I can tell you is that we're one of the few jurisdictions in the world that has a full-time job guarantee for new nursing graduates. It's something we're very proud of. The number of nurses who are working full-time now—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Minister of Health and the Premier can talk a good game about transferring care to the community, but in communities across this province, people know that this is nothing more than government spin because eliminating beds, nursing care,

intensive care units, emergency rooms and cancer clinics is not something that most communities have the ability to make up for.

Can the minister provide us with some evidence that the services by the nurses being cut from local hospitals are showing up in actual services in the communities that lost them?

1050

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm more than happy to talk about the enhanced community services where nurses play a pivotal role in our family health teams, in our community health centres, in our nurse-practitioner-led clinics, and in our long-term-care homes. Right across our health care system, nurses are playing an increasingly important role. The collaborative approach that we have really championed in our time in office means that nurses have more responsibility. And they are embracing that responsibility.

We have significantly increased the number of nurse practitioners. In fact, I believe that we've doubled the number of nurse practitioners in this province.

The responsibility of nurses is growing, and people in our communities are seeing the results of that.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Ontario families want to see responsible, smart health reform that protects patients and front-line services. Instead, we see cancer patients left without support. We see new moms left on their own, emergency rooms closed—all this as hospital CEOs continue to rake in exorbitant salaries and pocket huge raises like the one at Newmarket's Southlake Regional Health Centre, who received an 81% raise and has made \$2.9 million over five years.

Can the minister tell us when patients and their access to care will be the priority for this government?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: There is no higher priority we have than better access to health care. I think we have demonstrated that very clearly. We've got 1,200 new nursing positions in our long-term-care homes. We've got 1,200 new full-time nursing jobs in our hospitals. I'm proud of the investments that we have made.

I think it's important to contrast this with what happened under the NDP government. The number of RNs in Ontario fell by almost 3,000 while they were in office. And that's not all: There was a shift from full-time to casual employment. The percentage of nurses working full time actually fell under the NDP government.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Minister of Health. Yesterday, Northumberland residents were at Queen's Park to protest cuts to their local health care services. Northumberland Hills Hospital has recently experienced very deep service cuts, including closure of a diabetes education clinic, the end of outpatient rehabilitation services and the elimination of 26 hospital beds. Can the minister tell these Ontarians where in their community these new services can now be found?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I welcome the question because it gives me an opportunity to thank the member from Northumberland, Lou Rinaldi, for the exceptional work that he has done to protect health services in this riding.

I can tell you that our investments in Northumberland Hills Hospital include an increase in their base funding of more than 37% since we've been elected. We've also invested in bringing down wait times.

We're also really focusing on the aging at home strategy in that community. Part of the aging at home strategy is actually making sure that people who need care but don't need care in the hospital, the alternate-level-of-care patients, actually get the care that they need in the community. So part of the work that's happening at Northumberland Hills Hospital is actually focusing on people who are in the hospital but would be better served in the community.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The services that hospitals like Northumberland Hills used to provide may be available in the community, but only if you pay for them. When hospitals like Northumberland Hills or Toronto East General eliminate rehab services like physiotherapy, Ontarians either have to pay out of their pocket or live without these essential health care services. Is this the government's solution for health care in this province: make the patients pay?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm also really happy to just remind the member opposite that the beds that are closing are long-term-care beds—there are no other beds that are closing—and they will not close until there is a capacity in the community. It's the right thing for the people who are in those beds, those patients who would rather be somewhere else than in the hospital.

I also want to take a moment to talk about the citizens' advisory panel. I think this is a very innovative approach that Northumberland Hills Hospital took in this case. They actually brought together citizens and gave them very intense education into what some of the choices were in the hospital. There is no question that these are tough decisions, but the citizens' advisory panel was something that I think other hospitals may wish to explore, because it does actually ask the people in the community what they need to protect and what could be done better outside the—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: More than four million hours of nursing care disappear, and the government denies it. Communities like Peterborough are asked to brace for deep nursing cuts because of executive mismanagement, and the government remains silent. Patients are forced to pay for health services that their hospitals used to provide, and the government takes a bow.

When will we see health care reform from this government that actually improves the health care that people in this province rely on?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The approach that the member opposite is taking is that it's just business as

usual when it comes to health care: "Just keep paying more and hope that the money goes to where it will make a difference for people." Those days are over.

Our spending on health care is now at the point where we simply must make decisions about where we're going to spend those dollars, and we know we can make the right decisions, the thoughtful decisions, that will both improve patient care and bring the increase in spending down.

We're committing more money this year to health care than we did last year, just as we have done every year since we've been elected, and we'll spend more next year than we did this year. But the time has come to get a lot smarter about how we spend money when it comes to health care.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock, please. The clock is stopped.

I just want to take this opportunity, because this is a special school to me. These are students in the Speaker's gallery from Edward Street Public School in St. Thomas, with their teacher, Mr. Bruce Smith. It was in a grade 5 class at this very school that the political bug caught me, courtesy of my grade 5 teacher, Mrs. Ethel Bond. Please join me in welcoming the students and parents from Edward Street Public School in St. Thomas.

New question.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. Bill Murdoch: My question is to the Acting Premier, and I hope she'll answer this for me.

Even though industrial wind farms are largely being built in rural Ontario, your Green Energy Act cuts rural councillors and their families out of wind farm planning. Bill Bilton, mayor of Dawn-Euphemia, has been serving the public for 25 years, and he says that the province is throwing its weight around when it comes to industrial wind projects in his township. He says, "I was always told that planning is a public process. I guess on this issue, it isn't.... Basically, we don't have input anymore."

Can you tell me, Acting Premier, why you've made it so Ontario family farms have no say about industrial wind projects in their own backyard?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: To the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure.

Hon. Brad Duguid: That's simply not the case. There are numerous opportunities for public input and involvement in these renewable projects, as I responded to earlier. In fact, the proponent of the project must—I repeat, must—consult with the municipality and community. It's not an option; they have to consult with the municipality, and they have to consult with the community. Their concerns must be documented in their application and must indicate how the proponent is addressing the issues and concerns that are raised. Following their submission to the Ministry of the Environment, the application is

posted on the Environmental Bill of Rights for 30 to 60 days for public comment.

This is a thorough process. It cuts back on the red tape that the party of the member opposite talks about wanting to be against, but when it comes down to action, it appears that you're for red—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Murdoch: Unfortunately, the Deputy Premier doesn't want to answer. She finally gets a question in the House, and she has a chance.

I've got several more mayors and reeves and councillors in my riding with the same concerns as Bill Bilton. Mitch Twolan, who is the mayor of Huron-Kinloss township, supports a moratorium to study health concerns raised by rural families who have to live beside these large industrial wind farms. He points out that projects are already on hold until there are more transmission lines anyway. And he says, "When it comes to public health and peoples' concerns with health, you obviously can never have enough information."

Why is Dalton McGuinty opposed to an independent study of health and environmental impacts of industrial wind farms? Please answer; don't give the rhetoric to somebody else. You answer it.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Farmers in Prince Edward county and farmers across the province support this movement, and I'll tell you why: There are many farmers that are joining together and taking advantage of these programs, making some extra, much-needed revenue for themselves and their families. I don't know why the member wouldn't want to stand up for those farmers.

1100

We talked about contradictions. They're for red tape one minute, and the minute we're getting rid of red tape, they're against it. They're for investment one minute; the minute we're getting investment in this province, they are against it. Well, here's the mother of all contradictions: When they were in office, how did they treat municipalities? They downloaded on them like no government in the history of this province. They forced amalgamations on municipalities right across this province. There was more downloading when they were in office than any government in the history of Ontario—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. This government's wrong-headed decision to cut Toronto's Transit City program is threatening one of the GTA's most important transit projects: the Eglinton cross-town LRT. Eglinton is the only east-west road that connects Peel region in the west to Durham region in the east, and transit riders routinely spend 90 minutes or more making the trip across town.

Will the minister commit to having the shovels in the ground on this crucial transit project by the end of this year?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I absolutely understand how important Eglinton is; it goes through my riding and right across the city, and I completely agree with the member opposite, which is why we have not cancelled these programs; which is why we have not cut this funding. What we have done is made a decision that we have to stretch it over a longer period of time.

Right now, Metrolinx is working to bring forward a plan that will allow us to continue to move on all of these projects. I think the member opposite knows full well that this plan is being developed, and we have every intention of moving ahead.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: This is an absolutely essential transit project that we cannot afford to delay. The annual ridership of the Eglinton LRT is estimated to be 53 million customer trips by 2021, by far the highest ridership of any of the proposed Transit City lines, and its fate is so uncertain that even the Liberals' own member from Eglinton–Lawrence is holding an emergency meeting in his riding tonight to rally community residents to save it.

So, I repeat: Will the minister commit to having the shovels in the ground on the Eglinton LRT by the end of this year? Yes or no?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I have committed repeatedly to continue to work on these projects. I have committed repeatedly to work with Metrolinx to bring forward a plan to continue these projects. We have made a decision that we need to spread this money over a longer period of time, and that's what we are doing.

It is very interesting that this member from the party opposite has consistently voted against transit projects that we have brought forward. Right now, there's money being spent in Toronto: \$172 million to revitalize Union Station; \$416 million towards the replacement of TTC streetcars; \$870 million for funding the Toronto-York Spadina subway extension. All of those projects are things that this party opposite has not supported.

We stand for transit. We are going to continue to work on those projects—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

CHILD POVERTY

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Throughout Ontario, including in my riding of York South–Weston, families have been facing growing financial pressures as a result of the worldwide economic recession. Families are looking for supports to secure their most basic needs in order to better sustain themselves financially.

As part of the poverty reduction strategy, our government is keeping its commitment to continue to increase the Ontario child benefit. In my riding of York South–Weston, many families tell me that the Ontario child benefit is making a difference. The Ontario child benefit provides more assistance to more children and helps families make the transition from social assistance to employment.

Can the minister please tell this Legislature and Ontarians more about how the implementation of the Ontario child benefit will proceed?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I want to thank the member for York South–Weston for her advocacy on behalf of her community on this very important issue.

As part of the poverty reduction strategy, we introduced the Ontario child benefit. The Ontario child benefit represents a historic transformation of benefit payments with significant impact for all low-income Ontario families. By making child benefits flow separately from social assistance and distributing it to families based on need, the OCB assists not only families on social assistance but also families working low-wage jobs.

We're very proud of the Ontario child benefit and the difference it makes to moms and dads across Ontario. Parents want to provide the best for their kids, and the Ontario child benefit supports them in being able to do just that.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I thank the minister for the response and appreciate the clarification. Allowing parents to keep their children's benefits as they move from social assistance to employment is critical to expanding opportunities for children and families.

Increasing the Ontario child benefit to \$1,310 by 2013 will help give low-income families the financial support that they need to provide a better quality of life for their children. But an effective approach to breaking the cycle of poverty will need to do more. Can the minister please share what other actions our government is taking to reduce poverty in Ontario?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: Yes, to the member from York South–Weston, the Ontario child benefit is one part of a comprehensive strategy to help families lift themselves out of poverty and for us to reduce child poverty in this province by 25% within the next five years. In fact, in last month's budget, we invested \$63.5 million to fill the federal funding gap for child care. That will maintain 8,500 child care spaces and 1,000 jobs, and it will ensure that low-income working parents can continue to have access to affordable, high-quality child care. We are doing important and innovative work.

I recently had the chance to visit with the member for York South–Weston the Learning Enrichment Foundation. They and other partners are working with us across the province to reduce child poverty and to ensure that every child gets the best possible start in life.

TAXATION

Mr. John Yakubuski: My question is for the Acting Premier. In just 65 days, the McGuinty Liberals will begin attacking family budgets by making everyone pay their greedy tax grab on things we need and use every day.

Forbes McEwen from Omemee near Lindsay gets it. He says, "Electricity and gasoline costs will increase 8%." That's 8% more for electricity on top of the \$350 in

other taxes and fees the McGuinty Liberals have added to their bills.

The member for Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock hasn't asked, so I will: Will your greedy HST tax grab apply to your other greedy tax grabs on electricity?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: The Minister of Revenue.

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to thank our caucus member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock for the work that he's doing to make sure that there are jobs in his riding—jobs today, jobs tomorrow and jobs for a generation. That is the most important thing that we all must focus on, coming out of what people refer to as the great recession, the first time that the global economy has shrunk at the same time since the Dirty Thirties.

Now, there are those who think we should stand pat, but there are those on this side of the House who believe that we have to do the most important thing that we can do as government, which is to reform our tax system. Leading economists tell us that that is the route to greater prosperity so that we can afford the valuable programs that people rely upon. It's why it's important that our businesses are getting ready for this important change so they can be competitive, compete on the global stage and bring jobs right—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: In 65 more days, the Liberal members will learn what a mistake they made following along with Dalton McGuinty's decision to not consult Ontario families on his greedy HST tax grab. And I'll let you in on a little secret: Dalton McGuinty not only can't name a government that was elected after bringing in a harmonized sales tax; he can't name a single jurisdiction that brought in a harmonized sales tax and didn't lower the rate.

Walter Pape of North Bay gets it. He says, "If the government wants to implement the HST, it should have lowered the provincial sales tax rate to soften the blow and make it a tax-neutral proposition."

The member for Nipissing won't ask, so I will: What makes you think Ontario families also put up with you attacking their budgets to deal with your own budget—

1110

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister of Revenue?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I find it quite interesting. I just want to quote something here from somebody whom you know well: "The five provinces that still apply sales tax to business inputs, namely British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario and Prince Edward Island, should immediately end this practice. These provinces are further encouraged to harmonize their provincial sales taxes with the federal goods and services tax (GST), which already exempts business inputs." Who says that? Mike Harris says that. Wow.

Then I remember another quote: "I'm quite encouraged by the fact that the government of Ontario decided to harmonize the PST with the GST. This is jobs, this is investment, this is good economic policy," says Jim Flaherty.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The government members will please come to order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The Minister of Finance, Minister of Revenue and Minister of Economic Development.

New question.

HEALTH PROMOTION

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Promotion de la santé. Active Healthy Kids Canada released their annual report today, and the result should be a wake-up call to your ministry. Only 12% of children meet the recommended daily targets of physical activity. That gives us an F in this category for the fourth year in a row. Meanwhile, 74% of kids want to be active.

Physical activity is one of the four pillars of health promotion. When will the Minister of Health Promotion step up to the plate, provide leadership and stop failing our kids?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: I want to first of all thank Active Healthy Kids Canada for highlighting the issue of physical activity in Canada.

This is an issue not just for policy-makers, as it says right in the recommendations; it's for everyone. It's a public health and health care professionals issue; it's a parent issue; it's an issue for early childhood educators and for schools.

But let me tell you what we are doing, and I will tell you that 14% of children in Ontario are getting 90 minutes of physical activity a day. That is higher than the national average. This government is investing \$10 million annually towards our after-school initiative, which is aimed at youth in 270 sites in high-priority neighbourhoods across Ontario. We continue to invest in physical—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Did I really hear her say that 14% in Ontario is something to be proud of? Eighty-six per cent of the kids in Ontario don't have enough physical activity, and we should be proud of this?

The government has the power to move kids. You have it within your power. Seventy-five per cent of those inactive, obese kids will become obese adults. We spend \$2 billion in health care costs looking after obese adults and the costs are rising all the time.

The Obama administration is bringing calorie labelling on menus to fight the obesity crisis in the US. Why is the McGuinty government missing in action on this front? Why are they happy with the 14% of our kids being active? What is the minister's plan to address the obesity crisis?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: This government continues to be committed to addressing this issue in Ontario. We understand that there's more to be done, but government cannot do it alone. We need everybody to be on board with this.

We continue to invest. We invested \$17 million in the healthy communities fund. We also invested \$16.7 million to implement 20 minutes of daily physical education for elementary school students.

We need everybody to be on board with this. Yes, there's more to be done, but we continue to work with every sector to make improvements in this area. This is about our kids. You guys over there need to come on board and we all need to work on this.

I would tell you that since 2006 our government has invested \$584 million in community—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

EASTERN ONTARIO DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Jim Brownell: My question is to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Our province, like many jurisdictions around the world, is beginning to emerge from one of the most difficult economic downturns of our lifetime. Our economy is showing signs of improvement, people are being called back to work, and production levels are moving up slowly. This government should be applauded for what it has done to combat the negative effects of the recession by aiding industries such as auto and manufacturing. As a result of this government's efforts, thousands of jobs have been saved.

As it turns out, though, these industries are generally located in the southern portion of the province. As the member for Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry, representing eastern Ontario, I wonder what support our businesses are getting from this government. Like the people of southern Ontario, job security is a top concern for these people. It is for this reason that I ask the Minister of Economic Development and Trade: What is the government doing to support jobs in my riding and—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: We really do appreciate this question about economic development, in particular in eastern Ontario.

For all of Ontario, just when our businesses needed a partner the most, the Ontario government was there, and in particular a focus on manufacturing, which was, in fact, the sector hardest hit in this global recession. We're very pleased that at that time we had the programs that mattered. The Next Generation of Jobs Fund, as people will remember, has helped a multitude of companies make massive investments. A program like the advanced manufacturing investment strategy, which is a loan program: Loan commitments of \$135 million supported initiatives of investment of over \$1 billion. That's the kind of leveraging that our support can give them. The Next Generation of Jobs Fund: So far, 20 projects leveraging \$3 billion in investments and securing—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Brownell: I thank the minister for highlighting the ways in which the government has acted to

protect jobs, increase job security and strengthen our economy across the province and in my region of eastern Ontario, and I applaud you for your efforts.

I certainly know that in eastern Ontario we have benefited greatly from a program called the eastern Ontario development fund. I understand that this program has helped immensely with projects all across eastern Ontario, from Peterborough to the border of Quebec to the north. Seventeen million dollars is a lot of money that the government is spending, especially throughout the recession, but the results the minister highlighted are impressive.

I'd also like to know if she could provide the House with how the eastern Ontario development fund is protecting jobs—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I'm glad that the member referenced this fund because this member was a very strong advocate for the development of the eastern development fund. That meant that our government would focus in this region, which has had chronic issues of unemployment for a whole host of reasons. When you get a worldwide recession, it only makes it more difficult.

For example, we have great projects in that region. MacEwen Grain in Maxville: a new feed mill to help establish Maxville as an agriculture hub. Northern Cables Inc. in Brockville; Cam Tran in Colborne; McCloskey International in Peterborough; Burnbrae Farms Ltd.; Trillium Health Care Products—again, in Brockville: These are the kinds of projects that are creating jobs and helping companies tip towards that decision to make an investment—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is for the Acting Premier. Can the Acting Premier guarantee that the cost of direct health care services provided by pharmacists will not be downloaded onto families and seniors as a result of your proposed cuts to Ontario's community pharmacies?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I am very grateful to have the opportunity to talk about some of the changes that are coming in this province when it comes to the price of drugs. We are determined to bring down the cost of drugs for people who need those drugs to be or get healthy.

Let me give you some examples. The list I have is the 20 most commonly prescribed drugs in this province. Ramipril for high blood pressure: people today pay \$256 a year for that drug. Under the reform, they will pay \$87. That is a savings of \$169 for that person. For metformin for diabetes, they pay \$178 today; they will pay \$70 under these proposed reforms—

1120

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: What the minister knows full well and what they don't want to talk about is that whatever small cost savings might be achieved by seniors as a result of this are going to be more than offset on the other side by the increased costs that seniors are going to be asked to pay, costs that were formerly absorbed by pharmacists. They're now going to be expected to pay \$8 more in prescription delivery fees, \$10 more for over-the-counter medication counselling, \$20 more for blister packs and \$200 more in co-payments, which many pharmacists currently waive for seniors.

The Premier and the minister would like Ontario seniors to believe that he's reducing the cost of medications, but in fact he's adding more than enough costs to offset that at the other end.

Minister, will you commit today to ensure that Ontario seniors are not left to bear the brunt of these additional costs that—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The member opposite is speaking on behalf of Big Pharma and nobody else. They are on the side of rebates; we are on the side of lower drug prices for people in this province. Even the federal—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The members will please come to order. I would just remind the minister on the choice of her words in implying motive out of the mouths of members. Please continue.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Even the federal Competition Bureau understands that this rebate system is driving up the cost of drugs and padding the profits of big chain drugstores.

I know whose side we're on. We're on the side of patients: people who need drugs like cancer drugs, like blood pressure drugs, diabetes drugs, you name it. We're on the side of lower drug prices; the people opposite are on the side of pharmacy, and I am ashamed of them, that they would take this position. We are paying far too much for drugs in this province and we are determined to get those drug prices down.

CHILD POVERTY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Acting Premier. Ontario's most vulnerable children are under attack as a result of this government's callous reduction of the basic needs allowance. Many families on social assistance are receiving a mere dollar more in monthly support, an insult to those already struggling to properly feed their children. The problem is especially dire in Hamilton, which is why Hamiltonians have descended on this Legislature today. They want to know: When will the McGuinty government put an end to its heartless benefit shell game?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: To the Minister of Community and Social Services, please.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Thank you very much for the question. This government is very concerned about the well-being of children. That's why we have done so much since we were elected to help children. In order to help the children, we have to help the parents, so that's why we provided a 12% increase in OW and ODSP benefits since we were elected.

Yesterday, we finished the discussion on full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds, which will help children, again, and we have established the Ontario child benefit, which is a beautiful program that will come to help children. What did this party do? They voted against it.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Paul Miller: The Hamilton activists who are in the gallery behind us here—or out on the front lawn—have travelled to Queen's Park to tell this government and its poverty reduction strategy that it's failing. As Ontario families who receive social assistance fall deeper and deeper into poverty, this government shows extreme cruelty by clawing back the little relief they receive through the Ontario child benefit.

Will this minister and her government finally listen to our province's most vulnerable families and finally give them the little break they deserve today? Stop clawing back the Ontario child benefit by reducing basic needs allowances. If you want to do something for Hamilton, there they are.

Interruption.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. We welcome guests to observe the proceedings. As much as you may want to participate, you have to be elected to participate in the proceedings, so all you can do is observe. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I will refer the question to the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: As the member opposite knows, the Ontario child benefit is a transformative initiative. I want to be clear: Every family is better off as a result of the OCB—every family. I want to tell the member opposite what leaders in his community in Hamilton had to say—listen up: “The recent introduction of the Ontario child benefit, a new provincial program aimed specifically at middle- and low-income families with children”—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just remind the member from Hamilton East that he just asked a question. He should listen to the response, and he can call a late show if he's not satisfied with the answer.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: —“middle- and low-income families with children, provides extra financial help. This improved feature with our social safety net couldn't have come at a better time.” That was Don Jaffray, the executive director of the Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton-Wentworth.

What did the member opposite do? He voted against it. He voted against the Ontario child benefit; he voted against the increases; he voted against child care spaces;

they voted against rent supplements; they voted against minimum wage—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Hamilton East will please come to order.

New question.

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Mr. Khalil Ramal: My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Minister, in my riding and across Ontario, shoppers are choosing farmers' markets, where they know that the food being sold is fresh, high-quality Ontario food products. More and more of my constituents are supporting local farmers' markets and are telling me that knowing who is supplying them their food is extremely important.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Speak louder, Khalil; we can't hear you.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Perhaps if the member from Renfrew was not as vocal in this chamber, he would find it much easier to hear the questions being asked.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a very important question, especially for you, Mr. Speaker, because I know that you support local farmers and you support the food being produced in this province. Again, to the minister: As you know, in my riding and many others across the province of Ontario, at this present time people are visiting farmers' markets to buy local—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Carol Mitchell: Thank you for the question. I tell you, this is good news for Ontario. The 2008 Ontario farmers' market study found over 15 million shopper-visits were made to farmers' markets in Ontario. There are about 200 farmers' markets in Ontario, and their economic impact in Ontario is estimated to be up to \$1.9 billion per year. In 2008, our government invested \$4 million over four years for an Ontario farmers' market strategy, to provide consumers with greater access to local food directly from the farmer. I tell you, local food is what people want, and when people buy local food, everyone in Ontario wins.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Thank you, Minister, for supporting the farmers' markets. I know that farmers' markets are not just good for local business and for farmers; also, they are important for healthy food and to support our local communities. They support lower emissions from long-distance food travel and they support the local communities.

Minister, can you tell the House how important it is to create awareness among the community and Ontarians, to support the local farmers and also support our communities and local businesses?

Hon. Carol Mitchell: Through Open Ontario, we will continue to support opportunities to encourage Ontarians to buy local, but also we will be seeking new markets for

Ontario-grown produce. We have invested almost \$65 million in programming to support Ontario foods and we are committed to investing an additional \$40 million over the next two years. The Premier's summit, held earlier this month, focused on translating consumer demand into market realities. We are building a stronger value chain, from farm to retail. We will help Ontario's agri-food industry thrive and connect more consumers with their homegrown food products. Our government is committed to working with farmers to bring more Ontario food to the table. I tell you, when you buy Ontario, everybody wins. The environment—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

1130

DARLINGTON NUCLEAR GENERATING STATION

Mr. John O'Toole: My question is to the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure. Minister, on February 22, I asked you a question about the new build at the Darlington generating station, yet we've heard nothing. At that time, you said, "Our intention" certainly is "to move forward with the new build." Also, in that response on February 22, you indicated that you have been in discussion with AECL and the federal government. Once again, we've heard nothing. For all this green energy talk, one would think that you would focus on a Canadian-made solution of green nuclear energy. Yet there's no progress; there's only expensive, unreliable solar and wind.

Minister, when can Ontarians expect the new build at Darlington to begin?

Hon. Brad Duguid: It has been challenging for our government over the last seven years to make up for the lack of investment in our nuclear industry that came as part of the total neglect of our nuclear infrastructure and of all of our energy infrastructure that came under the Tories previous to us. But we're making great progress, and we've added 7,000 to 8,000 new megawatts to our power system. We'll be up to 10,000 within another 24 months. We are absolutely committed to the refurbishment program that's moving forward to modernize our nuclear fleet. We're committed to the building of two new nuclear units as well.

Maybe what I'll do is, I'll save this for the supplementary, because I can use the help of the member opposite with his federal cousins in Ottawa.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. John O'Toole: He would probably know that Durham riding is home to many citizens, and indeed the whole area is very supportive of the new-build nuclear. It's about jobs and the economy, after all.

We've heard the announcements from your government of the \$7-billion backdoor Samsung deal and expensive FIT contract deals. You found time for this, yet we are still waiting for real progress on the new build at Darlington. The minister will know that the Darlington plant produces about 20% of the electricity that powers

Ontario businesses and homes. This is a green, reliable form of energy in Ontario.

Minister, why does your government claim to support the new build at Darlington, but fail to give it any attention or to give it the green light?

Hon. Brad Duguid: It's too bad that that support for the nuclear industry wasn't there when that member and his party were in power, because we would have been a lot better off today had they made the investments that we have to make today to rebuild that system. I'm going to ask the member to do this: to contact his cousins in Ottawa, because we're working very hard to try to reach an agreement with—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): A final warning to the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: This is a very important decision for the future of our province, and we're in discussions with the AECL and the federal government. But we need our federal government to backstop some of the risk involved in this agreement, like every other nation and every other nuclear business around the world does. We're calling on the Harper government and we're calling on the AECL to help us get to a decision here, help us get to a resolution. We recognize how important this decision is, and Ontarians are counting on the federal government to work with us on this, not against us.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Ontario's municipalities rely on the Municipal Property Assessment Corp. to assess properties in a timely manner. According to André Marin, the agency is "grossly understaffed," and frankly, Minister, those people are demoralized.

MPAC is currently bargaining with its employees. The number of MPAC managers earning more than \$100,000 grew 50% in the last year. Worse than that, those managers received pay increases in one year of 5.3% to 12%. However, MPAC is telling its workers that they'll get no increase whatsoever for the next two years. This double standard could force people out on strike and disrupt assessments.

Will you tell MPAC to negotiate fairly to protect the public interest?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I remind the member opposite that we have frozen non-bargained compensation for all agencies of the government, including MPAC. I know that you voted against that, or I think you voted against it. I haven't looked at the Hansard of your vote. So let's deal with that off the top.

With respect to collective bargaining, the collective agreement has expired, as I understand it. The parties will, I hope, continue to negotiate and hopefully resolve the differences that they have, and we look forward to a satisfactory resolution of the issue.

I'll remind the member that the last time that André Marin brought forward recommendations—there were 21

of them—we acted on all of them. That member and his party actually voted against a number of those recommendations that we acted upon.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Municipalities are already affected by delays in assessments. As you know, Minister, MPAC has been in turmoil for 10 years. There was a botched restructuring which threw away decades of assessment expertise. There was a disastrous implementation of a new computer system with years of cost overruns. And yet managers continue to receive pay-for-performance bonuses despite a history of management non-performance.

MPAC receives no operational funding from the province. It is not covered by Bill 16. Forcing the employees out with unfair bargaining will hurt municipalities and the income that cities need to provide services. Will you tell MPAC to start thinking about the public and negotiate fairly with their employees?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: That member and his party have a history of stripping collective agreements, and they like to pretend it didn't happen.

As I say, we have confidence in the collective bargaining process. We have confidence that the reforms that we have brought about to MPAC are serving the people of Ontario well. I would suggest to the member that he allow collective bargaining to operate freely. I know their history is against that, but our history is all about that.

We have great confidence in the public servants of this province. We have great confidence in MPAC—and I'd also remind the member opposite that MPAC is an organization that is run by municipalities. We participate, but at the end of the day we need to allow collective bargaining to unfold in this situation, as we do in many others.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome a group of grade 10 students from Delta Secondary School and their teacher, Mike Wagter, from Hamilton today.

DEFERRED VOTES

FULL DAY EARLY LEARNING STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE L'APPRENTISSAGE DES JEUNES ENFANTS À TEMPS PLEIN

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We have a deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 242, An Act to amend the Education Act—

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I arrived in the House just a little bit late and I

didn't realize that the PC candidate from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex was in the audience.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): And the honourable member knows that that's not a point of order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order.

We have a deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 242, An Act to amend the Education Act and certain other Acts in relation to early childhood educators, junior kindergarten and kindergarten, extended day programs and certain other matters.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1139 to 1144.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): All those in favour will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Aggelonitis, Sophia	Gerretsen, John	Mitchell, Carol
Albanese, Laura	Gélinas, France	Moridi, Reza
Arthurs, Wayne	Gravelle, Michael	Murray, Glen R.
Balkissoon, Bas	Hampton, Howard	Naqvi, Yasir
Bartolucci, Rick	Hoskins, Eric	Oraziotti, David
Bentley, Christopher	Hoy, Pat	Phillips, Gerry
Best, Margaret	Jaczek, Helena	Prue, Michael
Bradley, James J.	Jeffrey, Linda	Pupatello, Sandra
Broten, Laurel C.	Johnson, Rick	Qaadri, Shafiq
Brownell, Jim	Kormos, Peter	Ramali, Khalil
Cansfield, Donna H.	Kwinter, Monte	Rinaldi, Lou
Colle, Mike	Leal, Jeff	Sandals, Liz
Craiton, Kim	Levac, Dave	Smith, Monique
Crozier, Bruce	Mangat, Amrit	Sousa, Charles
DiNovo, Cheri	Marchese, Rosario	Tabuns, Peter
Dombrowsky, Leona	Matthews, Deborah	Takhar, Harinder S.
Duguid, Brad	Mauro, Bill	Van Bommel, Maria
Duncan, Dwight	Meilleur, Madeleine	Wilkinson, John
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Miller, Paul	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Fonseca, Peter	Milloy, John	Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): All those opposed?

Nays

Bailey, Robert	Klees, Frank	Savoline, Joyce
Barrett, Toby	MacLeod, Lisa	Shurman, Peter
Chudleigh, Ted	Martiniuk, Gerry	Sterling, Norman W.
Elliott, Christine	Miller, Norm	Wilson, Jim
Hardeman, Ernie	Munro, Julia	Witmer, Elizabeth
Hillier, Randy	Murdoch, Bill	Yakubski, John
Hudak, Tim	O'Toole, John	
Jones, Sylvia	Ouellette, Jerry J.	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 60; the nays are 22.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

CONDUCT OF HOUSE PROCEEDINGS

Mr. Bill Murdoch: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, and I ask you for your advice on this: I requested a late show for tonight. I wasn't pleased with the answer I

received when I asked my question. It was the question I asked to the Deputy Premier. She did answer, and the answer was, "I defer it to someone else." That was her answer, I wasn't pleased with that answer, and I feel that I have the right to request her to come here tonight and answer me on that. Now, I've been informed that that's not an answer and that someone else—

Interjection.

Mr. Bill Murdoch: Does somebody else want to get in on this? You have a right to do that. You could speak after I'm done if you don't like what I'm asking, but I think this is what democracy is about.

I've asked for a late show and been told that the person I asked the question to—I can't do that. I find that she did answer my question; I wasn't satisfied with that, and I should have that right as a parliamentarian here to request a late show to understand why that question was deferred. There must be a reason for that, and I'd like to know that.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm asking you for your guidance on this. But as I said, I think I have that right to have that request.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I thank the honourable member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound for his point of order. We did have the opportunity in the lead-up to the vote to have some discussion. I offered—and the Clerk offered—an interpretation. He wasn't satisfied with that, so I will take his point of order under advisement and will rule on that at a later date.

There being no further business of the House, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1149 to 1500.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

JUNIOR HOCKEY

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: It is with great honour, privilege and pleasure that I stand here today to applaud the recent victory of the Oakville Blades. On Saturday in Sault Ste. Marie, the Oakville Blades defeated the Fort William North Stars in a 2-1 victory in the final game of the Dudley Hewitt Cup. The Blades ended the tournament with four wins and no losses—an awesome team.

In the game on Saturday, Blades forward Ryan Murphy scored the winning goal, breaking a 2-2 tie in the third period—very exciting. Mark McGowan had the Blades' other goal, and goalie Daniel Savelli earned the win with 20 saves. Blades forward Kellan Lain was named the 2010 Dudley Hewitt Cup MVP for the tournament. Forward Kyle Badham was recognized with the tournament leading scorer award and forward Ryan Murphy with a championship game MVP for Oakville.

As a result of the team's victory, for the second time in three years the Blades will represent central Canada at the Royal Bank Cup, Canada's national Junior A hockey championship in Manitoba.

I would like to congratulate head coach Jason Nobili and the entire Blades team on their success. When they go to Manitoba, they'll be meeting, amongst other teams, the Brockville Braves, from the home of the member for Leeds–Grenville, who sits directly behind me. We do have a small bet on the outcome of the Royal Bank Cup. Good luck.

When I say, "Good luck in Manitoba. Let's bring home another cup," I have an ulterior motive for cheering for them, to make that victory successful for Oakville.

DAY OF MOURNING

Mr. Paul Miller: The National Day of Mourning is a time to remember workers who have lost their lives and those they've left behind. I look forward to the day when workers are treated as individuals who are truly valued and respected.

But now, as summer approaches and many of our kids start their first jobs, we worry. As the system stands, profits take precedence over health and safety, loopholes and number-crunching above true accountability.

Current policies are all wrong. Care for the worker is not a priority. The LMR scheme is sustaining private career colleges where we hear new horror stories of unaccredited courses every week. But the LMR is failing to properly prepare injured workers for new careers.

Experience rating rewards companies who sneakily keep injuries off the WSIB books—yet another short-sighted policy that revolves around private profit and not around the worker. And deeming is a practice that helps the WSIB cut their payments, a practice which unfairly assesses what employment-injured workers could have.

What these policies amount to are people as numbers and figures on balance sheets, figures to be twisted for maximum profit. The WSIB needs a new emphasis called "care." Care for the worker: That is the WSIB's job. There are injured workers who cannot do the job they long to do. The WSIB must be reformed so that it is a workers' compensation program, not an insurance company.

Tomorrow, we officially mourn those who have lost their lives in the workplace, not as numbers or as budget targets but as individuals with families, all affected by workplace—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

GARRETT HOLMES

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Keeping with the theme of Oakville and sports, I want to recognize the incredible fundraising efforts of a young man in Oakville. Ten-year-old Garrett Holmes is the quarterback on the Halton Cowboys team, which plays in the Ontario Minor Football League.

He recently launched a fundraising initiative called Go Garrett Go, where people are being asked to pledge a dollar amount for every touchdown he either throws or scores himself during the spring season.

One hundred per cent of all donations will go directly to the Children's Miracle Network, and Free the Children, which is partnering with organizations in Haiti to support the rebuilding efforts following the devastating earthquake.

A few years ago, young Garrett suffered a severe seizure and was hospitalized at Sick Kids hospital. As a result, he was unable to play football for two years. The experience made Garrett aware of how lucky he is to have the opportunity to play sports and how he wanted to help others who could not.

The 2010 spring season is going to begin a few weeks from now, but already Go Garrett Go has pushed past the \$750-dollar-per-touchdown mark. Reasonable expectations have him pegged at 10 to 15 touchdowns per year. That would mean anywhere from \$7,500 to \$11,000 will be raised, and that amount, I'm sure, will rise.

I applaud his efforts. I'd like to thank him for demonstrating, despite his age, a tremendous and incredible drive to improve the lives of others through his fundraising efforts.

JUNIOR HOCKEY

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm pleased today to honour the Brockville Braves, winners of the Fred Page Cup as eastern Canadian junior A hockey champions. The Braves earned the trip to the national championships with a decisive 5-1 victory over their archrival, the Pembroke Lumber Kings, before more than 1,500 fans in an electrically charged Brockville memorial centre on Sunday afternoon. The Braves now travel to Dauphin, Manitoba, to compete for the RBC Cup.

The game's high points included two shorthanded goals in a five-minute penalty kill and stellar goaltending by Justin Gilbert, who was named tournament MVP.

Final-game scorers included Justin Taber, Scott Arnold, and captain Shayne Thompson, and Shayne Stockton with a pair of goals.

The Braves are the first-ever two-time Fred Page Cup champions, and I'm proud to say that I was president of the hockey club in 1998 when that first championship occurred.

Braves head coach Todd Gill and his team are to be congratulated for their record-breaking season. The team destroyed the record book with a CJHL, or Central Junior Hockey League, record of 106 points and an amazing consecutive-win streak of 26 games.

Fred Page Cup organizing committee chairman Norm Saunders and his 30 to 40 volunteers are to be commended for a well-organized event, with almost 9,000 fans attending the eight games.

I know I speak for all members of this House, with maybe the exception of the member for Halton, when I say good luck. Go, Braves, go!

ELENA MAMYCHEVA

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I rise today to congratulate Elena Mamychева, a grade 12 student at York Memorial Collegiate in my riding of York South–Weston.

Eighteen-year-old Elena is this year's winner of the University of Toronto Brain Olympiad. She was awarded first place last March 26.

The Brain Olympiad is a competition that asks questions related to the brain and neuroscience. Elena prepared by studying 14 hours a week with her teacher, Mark Harding. The win is the direct result of Elena's hard work and dedication to her education, as well as York Memorial's commitment to the success of its students.

This is an excellent example of how the support of educators and support staff in Ontario schools and boards, as well as initiatives such as the Ministry of Education's student success teams, are promoting student achievement along with rising graduation rates.

It gives me great pleasure to announce that Elena is the second student from York Memorial to win first place in the Toronto competition in two years. Last year's winner, Sean Amodeo, went on to place first in the national competition and to place fifth in the international competition.

Elena plans to continue to the national competition and beyond as she pursues her dream of a career in neuroscience.

On behalf of the proud community of York South-Weston, I would like to wish Elena every success in both future competitions and her career.

1510

GENERAL MOTORS OF CANADA

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: It's with great pleasure that I rise today to congratulate General Motors and the hard workers of the CAW. You see, over a century ago, a community called Oshawa lent a company now called General Motors an interest-free loan for a then-whopping \$50,000, which General Motors paid back in exemplary form.

That tradition that started 100 years ago continues today. You see, I'm happy to rise today to inform those who are unaware that Wednesday last, General Motors of Canada, which had taken a loan from the taxpayers of Ontario and Canada, paid back that loan in full, with interest, five years early. This goes to show how General Motors and the CAW workers are moving forward, making the changes necessary, returning confidence to the taxpayers of Ontario and Canada and keeping a proven history of relationship-building between General Motors, the CAW, taxpayers and consumers. Good work to all.

But the good news doesn't end there. The previous adding of two shifts will bring back over 1,300 workers as public demand rises and General Motors answers that demand once again. General Motors and the auto sector are the lifeblood of Oshawa and so many other communities, let alone the province of Ontario. This just goes to show that great things are once again happening in Oshawa.

MINOR HOCKEY

Mr. Bill Mauro: Last week in Regina, Canadian minor hockey history was made when the Thunder Bay Sportop Queens won the midget girls Canadian championship with a 4-3 win over the Notre Dame Hounds. Kaitlyn Tougas scored the winning goal in the third period.

With this victory by the Queens, Thunder Bay becomes the first city in Canada to win a national midget championship in both the female and male groups. The Queens advanced to the AA Esso Cup national championship in Regina by going undefeated 6-0 at the Ontario championships.

I offer my congratulations to Brianna Iazzolino, Courtney Tougas, Jana Henry, Michela Cava, Kaitlyn Tougas, Michaela Coulter, Ellia Heroux, Kaitlyn Quarrel, Riley Cronk, Amber Butler, Savanna Gamache, Taylor Savard, Brittany Zuback, Kylie Cornell, Haleigh Croves, Amanda Makela and Megan Leikkari. I also congratulate manager/trainer Crystal Tustian, trainer Melissa Parenteau, goalie coach Lui Tassone, conditioning coach Steve Bailot and assistant coach Randy LaPointe.

A special congratulations to the dynamic father-son coaching tandem, old friends of mine Denis and his son Danny Lavoie.

Overall, the Queens, sponsored by owner Gary Littlefield of Sportop, went a very impressive 13-1 in their playoff games, and this outstanding group of 15- to 17-year-olds went 34-5-1 in tournament action.

Thunder Bay's incredible hockey history has been further enriched by the efforts of all involved. Congratulations to the parents, to the coaches, to the players and to the sponsors.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. Jim Brownell: Recently, I welcomed the Premier to my riding of Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry, where he made an important announcement on green energy initiatives across the province of Ontario. The McGuinty government has just delivered the largest green energy initiative of its kind in Canadian history. Under the Green Energy Act's feed-in tariff program, 184 new contracts for big green energy projects have been approved.

This is wonderful news for eastern Ontario because 60 green energy projects with the potential generating capacity of 900 megawatts have been approved. This includes three 10-megawatt ground-mounted solar projects in the Cornwall area.

The three Cornwall-area solar projects are Northland Power in Cornwall; EffiSolar in the township of South Glengarry; and Penn Energy, also in the township of South Glengarry. This is in addition to 510 medium-sized green energy projects already announced. The contracts could generate more than 2,500 megawatts—enough electricity to power 600,000 homes. The domestic content requirements in these projects will mean thou-

sands of new jobs in the growing green energy sector and about \$9 billion in private sector investment.

This is good news for the province of Ontario, good news for eastern Ontario and good news for the people who championed this new investment. Growing our economy and growing a stronger Ontario requires that Ontario be open to change and open to opportunity, and these green energy initiatives are the way to the future.

OTTAWA SENATORS

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I'm going to continue with the sports theme of the day in members' statements. I'm going to share some good news and bad news. Let me deal with the bad news first. The bad news is my beloved Ottawa Senators did not proceed to the second round of the Stanley Cup playoffs. They did their best; they did their best, but they couldn't proceed. But the good news is that my community in Ottawa Centre still rallied together. They cheered the team on and they made sure that some good dollars were raised for local charities right in Ottawa.

Two people, Cameron Bishop and Sarah O'Grady, got together and organized the Sens Mile, which is the Elgin Street business corridor in my riding of Ottawa Centre—which is recognized by the city. At the Sens Mile, they approached some businesses and talked to them about donating some funds during the playoffs game. The result: \$10,000 were raised for the Ottawa Senators Foundation and their preferred charity of Roger's House. Roger's House is located on the CHEO campus, the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario, and provides a warm home-like environment for children in palliative care. It was very exciting. You can imagine: six games—\$10,000.

I want to give special thanks to the businesses involved: St. Louis Bar and Grill; D'Arcy McGee's; MacLaren's; Big Daddy's Bistro and Oyster Bar; the Standard Tavern; the Lieutenant's Pump; Johnny Farina Restaurant; Sir John A. Pub; Elgin Street Diner; Hangover Joe's; and Nine. A special thanks to Cameron Bishop and Sarah O'Grady for all their hard work.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received a report on intended appointments dated April 27, 2010, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 108(f)9, the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE

L'ENSEIGNEMENT POSTSECONDAIRE

Mr. Milloy moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 43, An Act to amend the Post-secondary Education Choice and Excellence Act, 2000, the Private Career Colleges Act, 2005 and the Ontario College of Art & Design Act, 2002 / *Projet de loi 43, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 favorisant le choix et l'excellence au niveau postsecondaire, la Loi de 2005 sur les collèges privés d'enseignement professionnel et la Loi de 2002 sur l'École d'art et de design de l'Ontario.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The minister for a short statement?

Hon. John Milloy: During ministerial statements, Mr. Speaker.

MOTIONS

APPOINTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSIONER

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice respecting the Environmental Commissioner.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I move that the Legislative Assembly recommends that Gord Miller be appointed as temporary Environmental Commissioner of Ontario for a period of not more than six months.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION ÉDUCATION POSTSECONDAIRE

Hon. John Milloy: Ontario's post-secondary education system is recognized for the quality of programs offered by our colleges and universities. We are a leader in quality assurance for our post-secondary education

system. This is a reputation we value highly and aim to protect.

Part of our government's Open Ontario plan to create new opportunities for jobs and growth includes raising the number of Ontarians with a post-secondary education credential to 70%. We are also opening our doors to the world and will increase international enrolment by 50%.

Today, I am pleased to announce we are moving forward on three different fronts. We are proposing amendments to the Post-secondary Education Choice and Excellence Act, 2000; the Private Career Colleges Act, 2005; and the Ontario College of Art & Design Act, 2002.

L'Ontario avance efficacement pour protéger sa réputation en matière d'excellence au niveau postsecondaire, sur le plan national et à l'étranger. Grâce aux mesures que nous prenons aujourd'hui, nous assurerons aux étudiants que les programmes de niveau postsecondaire offerts ici en Ontario sont de la plus haute qualité et qu'ils répondent à nos normes d'excellence.

We are introducing amendments to the Post-secondary Education Choice and Excellence Act, or PSECE, as it's called, to protect both international and Ontario students. The PSECE act came into effect in 2001 to expand access to degree programs, improve student protection and implement quality assurance for the new degree programs. The act allows private institutions from inside and outside of Ontario, public out-of-province institutions and colleges of applied arts and technology to apply to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities to offer a degree program. Previously, colleges of applied arts and technology and private institutions located in Ontario could not apply to offer degrees in this province.

The act created the Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board, which has implemented rigorous quality control to protect Ontario students from degree mills since that time. But we have experienced an increase in organizations challenging the Post-secondary Education Choice and Excellence Act and our ability to ensure the quality of our post-secondary education brand.

We believe we need more and stronger tools of enforcement, much like the changes we made to our Private Career Colleges Act. If passed, the proposed amendments would strengthen the ability of the government to shut down unscrupulous and unauthorized educational organizations and prevent them from taking advantage of international and Ontario students.

The amendments would allow the government to impose financial penalties and impose restraining and compliance orders against unauthorized degree-granting institutions. The amendments would also reduce red tape for publicly assisted colleges and other institutions by making the application process for consent to offer a degree program more cost-effective and less time-consuming.

Les nouvelles mesures protégeront mieux les étudiants qui suivent des cours d'enseignement à distance et des programmes en classe.

I have noted that our Private Career Colleges Act has strong enforcement measures that allow us to protect students. Today, we are proposing amendments to further strengthen our enforcement of this act. If passed, these amendments would raise the maximum financial penalties for provincial offences from \$25,000 to \$50,000 for individuals and from \$100,000 to \$250,000 for corporations. These penalties would be in keeping with other consumer protection legislation, such as the Consumer Protection Act, 2002. This would help us to improve student protection and the quality of PCCs and programs.

In addition to this, we are also proposing amendments to the OCAD act to help our premier design institute remain competitive with other Canadian art and design universities. If passed, these amendments would change the name of OCAD, the Ontario College of Art and Design, to OCAD University, the Ontario College of Art and Design University. Changes to the act would also establish a university senate and amend the powers of the board of governors.

I'd like to give credit for this OCAD item to my colleague Mr. Kwinter, the member from York Centre, who is a very strong proponent of OCAD and has certainly worked with us. I'd also like to pay tribute to members of OCAD who are here today in the gallery. We have Sara Diamond, the OCAD president; Sarah McKinnon, OCAD vice-president, academic; Robert Montgomery, the OCAD board of governors' chair; Amanda Almedia, the OCAD student representative on the board of governors; and Carole Beaulieu, the OCAD director of government relations. We want to thank them for their advocacy on these changes.

In closing, our Open Ontario plan recognizes the importance of post-secondary education to helping our government create more opportunities for jobs and growth to compete in the global market. A higher education will help Ontarians reach their full potential and help us open Ontario to global markets and future prosperity. After all, today's students are the builders, dreamers and innovators who will lead Ontario into the future. They will help us build a stronger Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

Mr. Jim Wilson: I'll say to the minister and to the government that I will reserve most of my comments until I've had a chance to review this bill. What I can say is what the minister has said, that it was back in 2006, under the former minister, your predecessor, that your government first said that it would undertake to review these acts, and that would be in particular the Post-secondary Education Choice and Excellence Act, 2000, and the Private Career Colleges Act. I'm just saying, what took you so long? That's four years ago that you first announced you were going to do a review of the acts. In the meantime—and I don't want to confuse private career colleges with degree programs offered under ministerial consent at universities, but in the meantime we had some of the strongest language we've ever seen from an Ontario Ombudsman. I can understand

from your perspective why you're not renewing his contract. He called it an urgent matter. He urged your ministry, Minister, to get tougher on unscrupulous private career colleges. His report of course was called *Too Cool for School* and he said that what was going on in many of the private career colleges was an unmitigated disaster. He urged your government to refund students that had been ripped off, and you guys refused to do that.

So I thought, especially with what happened at Bestech Academy, where the lady was running one of her colleges out of a restaurant in one of her locations and was not cracked down upon until many, many, many students complained to the opposition and to the government—I would hope that this act today, the new bill, does actually crack down and that you actually will use the authority that you have under current legislation. You're increasing the fines, as far as I can tell today, to crack down on unscrupulous private career colleges. I've not heard a lot of complaints about the degree programs offered under the other legislation, and that would be Algonquin College, Central Michigan University, Conestoga College, some of the degrees offered at Georgian College, Humber College, Lawrence Technological University. All of these have very good reputations that I am aware of, Minister. So I will be interested to learn more during debate and during the technical briefing on the bill on why the need to crack down.

The only link I can tell is, as you mentioned, on the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration's website; he's already beat you to the announcement. He's announced that you're going to make these changes, mainly for international students, as part of your Open Ontario plan. He doesn't say anything about how much it's going to cost the students or whether you are going to re-regulate international fees. I have a feeling that because the government's decided to use international students as a money-maker for the sector, you will be avoiding that aspect of what they really want to know. They trust already that Ontario has an excellent reputation in post-secondary education and that there are degree-granting institutions like OCAD which are or will be top-quality.

I do want to say to the representatives of OCAD that are here, as I've done as critic before on behalf of the PC caucus, as far as I can tell we shouldn't have any problems with the amendments to that part of the act and it's too bad you're put in this controversial act which talks about cracking down on bad people in the sector. Yours is good news, to change your name and amend the powers of the board of governors. I've served on the board of governors of U of T for many years and commend all those volunteers, as the minister has, who are working with the Ontario College of Art and Design, which will be called, if passed—of course I'm in opposition and have been in opposition for a few years, so everything gets passed that these guys propose. So I'm going to call you the Ontario College of Art and Design University and congratulate you ahead of time. And if there's anyone in my caucus that disagrees with that, I've been here 20 years so I will deal with that.

But the rest is going to be controversial. The questions of course will be, why didn't you do it sooner and why did so many students get ripped off in the private career colleges? You have not given a report back to Parliament as is part of the recommendations of the Ombudsman, to report back to the public on what you did to stop those unscrupulous operators. I was kind of expecting today that you'd spend a little more time—you had 20 minutes; you only took a minute and a half—to explain to us what you did since the last time you got on your feet and talked about the bad people in the sector. Are you cracking down on the bad people? If so, report back and tell us why exactly, when a number of the institutions that will be affected by this legislation have impeccable reputations, you're cracking down on them.

1530

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Thank you. I'll have an opportunity to speak to the bill directly once we debate it and once I review it. But I want to say, before I get into some of the criticism—because that's what I do, Minister; sorry to disappoint you—that I'm a strong supporter of OCAD. I don't mind that you inserted that into this bill, even though they don't seem to gel together in the way they should. But it's not a problem for me. They're in my riding. Strong support there—the name change is a good idea, including other powers they're getting. So we're happy you're here. Don't worry about it. I suspect the Conservative Party will support it as well. That shouldn't be an issue. But if you want to come for the other part, come back again.

With respect to what the minister is announcing today—I'm a bit surprised about some of the language, Minister, I have to tell you. I want to repeat for you because it puzzled me a little bit. You say: "We are a leader in quality assurance for our post-secondary education system." That worried me, because your reputation in this regard is not stellar. I'm going to refer to something that André Marin pointed out in his report that proves that you're not quite the leader you want to be. You also say that Ontario is moving to protect Ontario's reputation. You've got a lot to protect; I agree with you. When I read some of these quotes, there's much that we need to do with respect to our loss of reputation around the issue of unscrupulous private universities that spring up, and there are many. We've got over 420 private universities. Many of them are not so scrupulous, and much work needs to be done, no doubt about it. I'm hoping your bill will finally do that. We were hoping, naturally, that you would simply enforce the Private Career Colleges Act that you passed in 2005 and that came into effect in 2006. But if you need another bill because that bill was not quite good enough, God bless, let's look at it. But it would have been my hope that you would have enforced or applied the letter of the law that we have in this province at the moment.

You also say, the "Private Career Colleges Act has strong enforcement measures that allow us to protect students. Today, we are proposing amendments to further

strengthen our enforcement of this act.” We’ll see what they are. Yet you admit that the previous bill, in 2005, had the tools—that you had the tools to be able to use it effectively but you and/or your ministry folks weren’t using it very effectively. That is puzzling.

Just to read, for the record, what Mr. Marin said in relation to his review of a number of these problems: “The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities is responsible for overseeing over 400 private career colleges and protecting student consumers against unscrupulous and incompetent training providers. In 2006, the Private Career Colleges Act, 2005, came into force, providing the ministry with even broader and more enhanced powers of enforcement, and students with greater protections including access to refunds and alternate training when colleges unexpectedly close their doors.” It tells you the kinds of power you have already. “Despite the fact that it is illegal to operate a private career college that is not registered with the ministry, a considerable number of unregistered training facilities exist in Ontario, presenting a risk to unwary consumers. The ministry is fully cognizant of this reality. However, it does not vigorously pursue information about or enforcement against rogue operators.” You’re aware of it and you do very little to pursue them.

They talk about Bestech, which they reviewed in this particular report: “The ministry learned that Bestech Academy was also falsely marketing itself as a registered vocational college. Instead of trying to shut down Bestech Academy to protect student consumers, as a result of confusion and miscommunication, the ministry instead proceeded to support the school through the Ontario skills development program.”

There are so many problems, as you can see. I highlighted three or four other spots that I wanted to review with you to tell you that we have serious problems, and your reputation has been affected for many, many years. You did have time. You knew problems existed, and your ministry simply did not pursue them. You do not have a very good record.

Mercifully—thankfully, perhaps—now you can do something anew by presenting a new bill, even though you had the tools to do it. Let’s look at it and see what else comes up in the next little while.

PETITIONS

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

Mr. Jim Wilson: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Tim Hudak and the Ontario PC caucus support public health care and protecting access to front-line care;

“Whereas Ontario families have already given Dalton McGuinty \$15 billion in health taxes, which was wasted on the \$1-billion eHealth scandal. Now the McGuinty

Liberals are cutting front-line public health care and putting independent pharmacies at risk;

“Dalton McGuinty’s cuts will:

“—reduce pharmacy hours during evenings and weekends;

“—increase wait times and lineups for patients;

“—increase the out-of-pocket fees people pay for their medication and its delivery; and

“—reduce critical patient health care services for seniors and people with chronic illnesses such as diabetes, heart disease and breathing problems;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the McGuinty government stop its cuts to pharmacies.”

I agree with this petition and I will sign it.

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario PC caucus supports public health care and protecting access to front-line care;

“Ontario families have already paid Dalton McGuinty \$15 billion in health taxes, which has been wasted on the \$1-billion eHealth scandal. Now the McGuinty Liberals are cutting front-line public health care in our communities and putting independent rural pharmacies in Bruce and Grey at risk;

“Dalton McGuinty’s cuts will:

“—reduce local pharmacy hours during evenings and weekends;

“—increase wait times and lineups for patients;

“—increase out-of-pocket fees people pay for their medication and its delivery; and

“—reduce critical health care services for seniors and people with chronic illnesses such as diabetes, heart disease and breathing problems;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the McGuinty government stop its cuts to rural pharmacies.”

I have signed this and will give it to Kyle.

ABORIGINAL PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: I have a petition addressed here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the health of the First Nations youth in Ontario is of growing concern;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To continue the partnership with the Right to Play partnership with the Moose Cree First Nation;

“To expand the Right to Play program to other First Nations communities; and

"To follow up these programs to ensure that other initiatives continue to promote the health of First Nations youth in Ontario."

Of course, I will append my signature and send it to you by way of page Tara.

TAXATION

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a petition regarding taxes. It reads, "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty promised Ontarians he would not raise their taxes and then broke that promise after getting elected; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty also said it would be 'silly' to raise taxes in a time of economic challenge; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty's new plan to blend the provincial sales tax with the GST into one harmonized tax, the 13% Dalton sales tax..., scheduled to take effect on July 1, 2010, represents one of the largest tax hikes in Ontario history, at a time when Ontarians are still feeling the effects of the recession; and

"Whereas the 13% DST will increase the cost of a long list of items not previously subject to the provincial sales tax, including electricity, cable, gas, transit fares, haircuts, newspapers and magazines, your morning cup of coffee—all things Ontarians depend on every day—making it even more difficult for families and seniors to make ends meet; and

"Whereas the 13% DST will also raise the cost of carpentry and plumbing services, heating and air conditioning repairs, landscaping and snowplowing, renovations and other professional services, meaning that home prices, condo fees and rents will all go up, and businesses will have a harder time paying the bills;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government not impose this new tax on Ontario's hard-working families and businesses."

HIGHWAY 17/174

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde: I've got a petition here that comes from concerned citizens on the road safety of Highway 17/174.

"Whereas Highway 17/174 needs to be expanded to four lanes from Trim Road to Prescott-Russell Regional Road 8 in order to enhance road safety; and

"Whereas Highway 17/174 has been known in the past for its hazardous condition and accident rate; and

"Whereas this highway represents the main artery for the working population of Clarence-Rockland, Alfred and Plantagenet and Hawkesbury to access the national capital; and

1540

"Whereas the united counties of Prescott-Russell have demonstrated their interest in conducting the environmental assessment for the widening of Highway 17/174 by passing a council resolution; and

"Whereas the city of Ottawa passed a council resolution asking that either the province or the united counties of Prescott and Russell take the lead in the environmental assessments; and

"Whereas both the federal and provincial governments have each committed \$40 million towards the widening of Highway 17/174;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to provide the necessary funding to the united counties of Prescott and Russell to undertake the environmental assessments required for the widening of Highway 17/174 from two to four lanes between Trim Road and Prescott-Russell Regional Road 8."

I am supporting this petition by adding my signature.

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition signed by residents of my riding from the township of Rideau Lakes and the township of Leeds and the Thousand Islands. It was collected at the Delta Community Pharmacy. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Tim Hudak and the Ontario PC caucus support public health care and protecting access to front-line care;

"Whereas Ontario families have already given Dalton McGuinty \$15 billion in health taxes, which was wasted on the \$1-billion eHealth scandal. Now the McGuinty Liberals are cutting front-line public health care and putting independent pharmacies at risk;

"Dalton McGuinty's cuts will:

"—reduce pharmacy hours during evenings and weekends,

"—increase wait times and lineups for patients,

"—increase the out-of-pocket fees people pay for their medication and its delivery,

"—reduce critical patient health care services for seniors and people with chronic illnesses such as diabetes, heart disease and breathing problems;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government stop its cuts to pharmacies."

I certainly agree with the petition, will affix my signature, and give it to page Tudor.

TAXATION

Mr. Norm Miller: I have another, different petition to do with the DST, and it reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty's plan to blend the PST with the GST into one 13% harmonized sales tax (HST) represents one of the largest tax hikes in Ontario history, at a time when families and businesses can least afford it; and

"This new tax, which we are calling the DST ... will raise the cost of a long list of goods and services not previously subject to provincial sales tax, including:

electricity; home heating oil and gas at the pump; haircuts; newspapers and magazines; Internet and cable; home renovations; heating; air-conditioning repairs; accounting, legal and real estate fees; condo fees; new home sales; rents will also go up; minor hockey registration fees will increase; and green fees and gym fees will also be taxed;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government not impose this new tax on Ontario's hard-working families and businesses."

I affix my signature.

ELMVALE DISTRICT HIGH SCHOOL

Mr. Jim Wilson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Elmvale District High School is an important part of the community of Elmvale and surrounding area; and

"Whereas the school is widely recognized as having high educational requirements and is well known for producing exceptional graduates who have gone on to work as professionals in health care, agriculture, community safety, the trades and many other fields that give back to the community; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty promised during the 2007 election that he would keep rural schools open when he declared that 'Rural schools help keep communities strong, which is why we're not only committed to keeping them open—but strengthening them'; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty found \$12 million to keep school swimming pools open in Toronto but hasn't found any money to keep an actual rural school open in Elmvale;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Education support the citizens of Elmvale and flow funding to the local school board so that Elmvale District High School can remain open to serve the vibrant community of Elmvale and surrounding area."

I agree with the petition and will sign it.

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

Mr. Jeff Leal: I have a petition today from good citizens from the riding of Peterborough.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of Ontario has dedicated new funding of \$100 million in addition to the \$50 million already available for professional services;

"Whereas the government is increasing the dispensing fees in the public system to help properly compensate local pharmacists for their valuable contribution to community health care;

"Whereas the opposition who are against these reforms are only interested in helping the big pharmacy chain companies increase their bottom line;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To continue to increase the money that is invested in Ontario's public drug system and to ensure that a higher quality of care is delivered, particularly for families and seniors."

I agree with this petition, will affix my signature to it and give it to page Mitchell.

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition from my riding. It's from downtown Prescott, from the Seaway Valley IDA pharmacy. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas ... the Ontario PC caucus support public health care...;

"Whereas Ontario families have already given Dalton McGuinty \$15 billion in health taxes, which was wasted on the \$1-billion eHealth scandal. Now the McGuinty Liberals are cutting front-line public health care and putting independent pharmacies at risk;

"Dalton McGuinty's cuts will:

"—reduce pharmacy hours during evenings and weekends,

"—increase wait times and lineups for patients,

"—increase the out-of-pocket fees people pay for their medication and its delivery,

"—reduce critical patient health care services for seniors and people with chronic illnesses such as diabetes, heart disease and breathing problems;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government stop its cuts to pharmacies."

I agree with it, I will affix my signature and I'll give it to page Zachery to present to the table.

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I have a petition here addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas some pharmacies have withheld their services or made them less accessible for Ontarians in an unfair attempt to protest much-needed drug reforms; and

"Whereas Ontario opposition politicians are supporting these harmful tactics by refusing to support the reforms that will make prescription drugs more affordable for Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That all members of the Legislature withdraw their support for those engaged in protest tactics that are harmful and misleading to patients requiring prescription medications; and

"That all members of the Legislature support the drug reforms that will lower prescription drug costs for Ontarians and fairly compensate pharmacists for the services they provide."

I agree with this and I'm going to send it with Max to the table.

1550

TAXATION

Mrs. Julia Munro: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the McGuinty government's plan to harmonize the PST and the GST will result in Ontario taxpayers paying 8% more for a multitude of products and services;

"Whereas the 8% tax increase will increase the cost of services such as housing and real estate services, gasoline, hydro bills, home heating fuel, Internet and cable bills, haircuts, gym memberships, legal services, construction and renovations, car repairs, plumbing and electrical services, landscaping services, leisure activities, hotel rooms, veterinary services for the family pet and even funeral services; and

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers cannot afford this tax grab—particularly in the middle of a recession;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the government of Ontario to abandon the sales tax increase announced in the 2009 budget."

As I am in complete agreement, I have affixed my signature and send it with page Tudor.

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

Mr. Steve Clark: I want to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly from Pharma Plus in Brockville, my hometown.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Tim Hudak and the Ontario PC caucus support public health care and protecting access to front-line care;

"Whereas Ontario families have already given Dalton McGuinty \$15 billion in health taxes, which was wasted on the \$1-billion eHealth scandal. Now the McGuinty Liberals are cutting front-line public health care and putting independent pharmacies at risk;

"Dalton McGuinty's cuts will:

"—reduce pharmacy hours during evenings and weekends,

"—increase wait times and lineups for patients,

"—increase the out-of-pocket fees people pay for their medication and its delivery,

"—reduce critical patient health care services for seniors and people with chronic illnesses such as diabetes, heart disease and breathing problems;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government stop its cuts to pharmacies."

I certainly agree with it. I will sign it and send it with Mitchell down to the table.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PENSION BENEFITS AMENDMENT ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES RÉGIMES DE RETRAITE

Ms. Smith, on behalf of Mr. Duncan, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 236, An Act to amend the Pension Benefits Act /
Projet de loi 236, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les régimes de retraite.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Debate?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Mr. Speaker, I'll be sharing my time today with the member from Pickering—Scarborough East.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I want to thank the House leader for sharing with me, as did the chair of cabinet a couple of weeks ago, the vast majority of the time available, which is always appreciated.

I'm very pleased that we are at this point in this process with respect to Bill 236, the Pension Benefits Amendment Act, 2010. I'm pleased that we're here in the third part of the process. We've obviously had extensive debate during the past weeks and months on the bill itself: the stakeholder consultation; inputs from all sides of the House in regard to the bill; the second reading vote; and the subsequent hearings that were held. We're pleased, obviously, to be at this point on this particular matter that is of such interest broadly—the issue of pensions—to Ontarians, and I would even say to Canadians, but in the context of our work, obviously Ontarians.

The subject of reforming the retirement income system has been very much in the public realm of late, as both pension plans and retirees have been affected by the global economic recession. The currency of this particular discussion broadly continues. The federal government has been undertaking its own consulting process on a national scope. The Minister of Finance just last week was in London, Ontario, with the federal Minister of Finance on a stakeholder round table that the federal minister was holding as part of their process in regard to pension reform and, broadly, pension renewal in this country.

Families now have increased concerns, obviously, about their futures after members retire from the active workforce. Retirees themselves, those who have already finished in the workforce, have added concerns about how they will continue to live within the lifestyles they've established and how pension reform can assist in doing that and what the economy does in that regard as well.

Why, you might ask, is pension reform needed in Ontario? It's not often something that is, in detail, at the tip of the tongue of Ontarians, but why do we need it?

Over the next 20 years, the portion of the population aged 65 or over will nearly double to about 23% by 2030. That will be up almost 14% in 2009 and will continue to increase over the first half of this century. By the end of the first half of this century, over a quarter of the population will be 65 or older. So this is a matter that Ontarians, those who are retired and those who are in the workforce and even those who might not be yet, might take a modest interest in. Thus, the level of incomes for the older and largely retired population will have an increasing impact on the economic and social well-being of our population in general.

During second reading debate, we had the opportunity to speak of the important role that retirees play in the economy. It's their capacity to have disposable income that allows them to put money back into the economy, which drives, in effect, the jobs that those who are in the workforce can sustain. So their contribution is not just a matter of having pensions and their income at retirement for their own very modest means, but ideally to have a level of income that allows them to be substantive contributors to the economy on a going-forward basis.

We have an obligation to create the strongest environment possible for the financial security of Ontarians in their retirement, because they've earned that through their very substantive efforts. I think everyone in this place will agree that we have that obligation. Seniors and retirees have worked hard so that we have the type of lifestyle many of us now have. Part of our role is to ensure a level of security for them in their retirement. It has been their hard work and dedication that has driven the economy of our province and made it such an attractive place for people to live, work and invest, and we want to see that continue as we move forward.

Ontario's workforce has built our quality of life here in this province, and they've earned the right to continue to enjoy that lifestyle in their retirement.

The government has recognized that, and despite the vital importance of pension plans to the health of Ontario's economy, it has been more than 20 years since there's been significant pension reform in the province. Twenty years is a long time. For many, it's certainly half of their working life since we have had a serious look at pension reform here in Ontario, and I might suggest nationally as well.

In that regard, since March of last year our government has taken a number of significant steps to address employment pension system issues. For example, we have introduced a temporary solvency funding relief program that helps to protect jobs and the families of those who work at those jobs.

We are working to simplify pension division when a marriage ends. Probably those of us in this room know others who have been in situations where a marriage has dissolved and families are impacted and the difficulties that occur with trying to sort out pension division at that point in time when either both spouses were working or one or the other spouse is working, what the benefits are and what the rights are. We've worked to simplify that process.

We've initiated the first-ever actuarial study to determine and examine the financial health of the pension benefits guarantee fund. There's been lots of discussion in this place over the past year or so about that particular fund. We need to be looking at it to see about its sustainability.

We've also established an advisory council on pensions and retirement income because we need the best possible advice not just from experts but from stakeholders very, very broadly.

We've initiated technical discussions with the Canadian Institute of Actuaries about funding rules for defined benefit pension plans. We need to know that whether it's defined benefit plans or defined contribution plans, whether it deals with the pension benefits guarantee fund, that we have the best information possible—and we haven't had that. Clearly, without reform over 20 years we as a province have not stayed current on the information necessary to make good decisions.

To further our plan for reforming the pension system in Ontario and building on the recommendations of the Expert Commission on Pensions, the government introduced Bill 236, the Pension Benefits Amendment Act, in 2010. The reform package addresses many significant issues while striking a balance between the concerns of stakeholders and delivers on our commitment which we made during the 2009 budget, which was to review the pension systems in this province.

For the benefit of the members here in the Legislature, I want to briefly describe the reforms that are proposed in our bill and certainly thank the members on the committee from all sides who took the time, obviously, to hear the witnesses and provide their input as we moved through the clause-by-clause and considered additional recommendations to the bill at that point in time.

The proposed amendments would provide for the restructuring of pension plans affected by corporate reorganizations. Surely we have seen, and will continue to see, many of those under the current economic climate that we have. Corporate reorganizations are not new, but I think they have accelerated in the past few years, and one would see little expectation that that would slow in the foreseeable future.

We want to protect the benefits and security for plan members and pensioners. Some of this can be achieved through some of the following measures.

We have to put in place requirements for asset transfers between plans if there is a restructuring, particularly as it relates to defined benefits. These need to be clarified and simple. Although an individual's specific benefits may be altered as a result of a restructuring and transfer, the actual value of a member's accrued benefit would be protected. So we're looking at windows of opportunity for transfer of benefit plans but not such that it would affect the contributions and the commuted value that employees have established that they're depending on for their pensions as things move forward.

On a reorganization, if the transaction involves the transfer of a portion of the membership from one

employer's plan to another—not the entire employee membership but only a portion of it—employers would be permitted to agree to give individual members the option of transferring or not transferring the value of their pension plan to the successor plan. So individual members of the pension plan would have a greater degree of individual flexibility as it might meet their own particular needs, because not every employee is going to be faced with exactly the same set of conditions.

A prescribed portion of any surplus related to the assets being transferred from the previous employer plan would be transferred to the successor plan, and the government will consult with stakeholders prior to setting the size of that prescribed portion. So there are some constraints that will have to be put in place to make sure that this works effectively.

1600

Asset transfers between plans would continue to require the consent of the superintendent of financial services, the fiscal superintendent, to protect the value of the members' and other beneficiaries' benefits. That's the oversight part. There is a need to have government oversight, in this case at arm's length, through FSCO, through the superintendent, to continue to have the superintendent's consent with respect to some of these transfers occurring. It just makes sense to have that third party at arm's length, with some oversight involved in the process.

Until July 2015, pension plans affected by past restructurings could enter into agreements that would allow current individual plan members to consolidate their pension benefits into a single plan through an asset transfer based on value. There are some provisions for windup activities, to be able to have members take care of the transfer issues that are needed.

As well, there's a need to clarify benefits for plan members that might be affected by layoffs, and to eliminate the partial windups that occur. A pension plan windup occurs when the plan is terminated and all the assets become distributed. A partial windup, though, may occur when a significant element of the workforce is eliminated—not the entire workforce—or a particular function or workplace is discontinued.

If passed, under this particular legislation, new partial windups would not be allowed following a transition period to end in June 2012. A partial windup with an effective date prior to that date would be permitted for a further period, so we're not going to change the rules arbitrarily midstream for various organizations or retirees. But after that, no partial windups could be declared. At that point, no distribution of surplus would be required except on a full windup of the plan.

Among the issues that we needed to address during this process were the grow-in benefits that enable qualifying employees to receive enhanced early retirement benefits from those plans that offer them. This would be extended to all eligible members whose employment is terminated by the employer other than for cause, and would continue to be provided on full windup of the

pension plan. These provide windows of opportunity for employees who might leave an individual employer, who have built some partial pension benefit opportunity, to be able to continue to have that value in place on their retirement, save and except where someone was dismissed with cause.

To balance these entitlements with those of other stakeholders—and there are other stakeholders involved—multi-employer pension plans and jointly sponsored pension plans could elect not to provide grow-in benefits, according to a prescribed process, and that process is well laid out.

Under our proposed changes, all accrued pension benefits would be vested immediately, so they're held. A transition period would allow plan administrators to adjust to this change, and the amount for small pension benefits would be increased.

There are a number of provisions, obviously, within the act that are intended to protect the interests of employees, to provide a better window for them to protect their families, in some instances, such as with the issues around marital breakup. These are important to employees in the province and certainly important to their future and to the future of their families.

There are a number of measures that are going to be put in place. Retired members, as an example—those receiving pension payments—would be defined separately from former members. We heard this clearly from the stakeholders, those who are retired and want to be addressed in the plans as retired members so that they can participate actively. That was one of the constraints: There was no real window, a good window, for them to be active participants in pension advisory committees. That's being put in place as part of this legislation, because retirees who are now out of the workplace want to feel they have the same benefits of participation that active employees would have.

There are new rules that would make pension advisory committees easier to establish, allowing members and retired members to monitor plans on an advisory basis. Co-operation from plan administrators would be required as specified, though.

Plans would be required to give all members, including retired members, information about the funded status of plans at various prescribed times. That was one of the issues we heard from the stakeholders: the window of access that they were looking for, a means of opportunity to know what the status of the plan was, to know what the fiscal status was. Frankly, as much as we might think that's a simple thing to do, and it should have been happening, it wasn't necessarily. Retired members in particular have great difficulty in acquiring that kind of information.

There are any number of issues that I could spend some considerable time on, but our time today is going to be somewhat constrained. As a result, I'm going to make sure that I don't take more than the time allocated, because I know members opposite wanted to speak to this bill.

I think the important parts are—much of what I said deals with some of the technical elements of the bill, and it is a technical bill in many ways. But there are stakeholders who have spent a considerable amount of time, and we were very pleased to hear them and the inputs they had during the consultations and certainly during the committee hearings. And I would suggest particularly from retired members, who probably had the best insights in many cases about the impact that pensions have and about their sustainability and what it means to their lives—I want to thank them for their contribution during the process.

I very much look forward to the balance of the third reading debate. I understand from the minister, as I think everyone is aware here, that later in this year we anticipate additional legislation, a second piece of legislation coming forward in regard to pensions in which we can continue to have this discussion in the interest of Ontarians. At the same time, we continue to engage ourselves, and will engage ourselves, with our peers through the finance ministers across this country, provincially and nationally, as we seek to find the best solution for those moving out of the workforce into retirement to provide them with the lifestyle which they have earned during their time in the workforce.

Speaker, thank you very much, and I'm hoping that when the debate is finished, we'll have the support of all members of the Legislature for this pension reform bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Mr. Jim Wilson: I just ask the parliamentary assistant—first of all, I appreciate the section of the bill that deals with asset transfers between pension plans, because it is exactly the type of enabling legislation that I asked for during one of my private member's ballots, a resolution on paramedic pensions.

It started out with just Simcoe county paramedics who had a problem when we divested paramedic services from either hospital-based services or Ministry of Health-based services, and they went into municipal-based services or into the OMERS pension. Unlike the OPP, who have in the police act the ability to transfer their pensions very smoothly, that wasn't the case in the mid-1990s. Since the Simcoe paramedics mentioned it to me, hundreds, if not—we're told that almost 30,000 people are affected by this section of the act in terms of divestment. Many of them don't know that. That's one question.

People who went through a change of employer but not a change of job, through no fault of their own, like paramedics or like MPAC employees who were Ontario revenue bureaucrats and then later became MPAC property assessors, were also deemed to have changed employers, but their pensions and their pension rights weren't fully transferred. They're wondering how their former colleagues or current colleagues will all know about these changes and the ability to have their current plan negotiate with their old plan so that they get the maximum benefit.

I noticed in committee that you did change the date so that people have up to July 1, 2015, to make sure that OMERS sits down with OPTrust and that the hospitals of Ontario, which I think is called the healthcare of Ontario pension plan, sits down with OMERS and many other examples. I don't want you to drag this on. We want it done immediately, and how will people know—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd just like to say that this is a very complex issue, as we all know. Pension reform hasn't been really done since the early 1980s, and it requires a lot of input from various groups and also input from members of this House.

Being a complicated issue—you have MEPPs, which are multiple-employer plans; you have SEPPs, which are single-employer plans; you have contributory plans; you have defined pension plans; numerous other smaller plans; and insurance plans. To get all these people onboard is a very complex issue. Bill 236 is starting the process—I repeat: starting it. It falls very short of the actual fine-tuned bill that we would like to see.

We had a lot of input from the NDP and the opposition party. Actually, we personally put in 15 amendments that fell on deaf ears, as usual, which happens in committee. They never accept any amendments. Any constructive criticism goes by the wayside. If it doesn't get dealt with there, it somehow, mysteriously, appears about six months later in a government suggestion. It's very frustrating, speaking from the position of the opposition, to actually get good input, and we had some very, very big organizations come forward with their suggestions from different perspectives. There were pensioners who weren't union; there were pensioners who were union; there were other groups—salary groups, non-salary groups and lots of other groups that came forward which had great ideas—good, constructive criticism that we brought forward in our amendments, which, once again, were ignored.

This bill is an administrative change, which is good, and it deals with a couple of issues that we like, but it falls drastically short of where we'd like to be.

1610

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Mike Colle: I'd like to thank the member for Pickering-Scarborough East because he's got a foot in both Durham region and the city of Toronto—quite unusual.

But he, along with, I think, all the members of the committee and also the members of the ministry staff who have taken time—as all members have said, this is an extremely detailed piece of legislation that deals with many issues that are beyond the comprehension of most of us here, but we do understand that there is a need to undertake this administrative reform. I think one of the members mentioned that really, nothing has been done of any substance in this area since the early 1980s, probably. I know that even the Premier has been trying to

get the federal government involved in undertaking some substantive measures in pension reform.

It's something that will be of benefit. It's one of many steps that I'm sure will have to be taken. For too long, this has been on the back burner for most governments because, I think, it reflects where people are at: They never start to think of their pension until they get to a certain age or stage in life, and it's hard to get them to pay attention to it.

But some of the changes here are quite important. I know they've consulted with a lot of stakeholders and they've been setting up these pension advisory committees that are easier to establish now. Also, giving more information to members about their fund status is very important, and also being more transparent about related fees etc.

There are some good initiatives here in this piece of legislation. It's the type of thing that governments have to undertake, even though we never really get clamouring for pension reform until something collapses, as has happened in too many cases that are well known. It's timely legislation. I hope it's the first step of many steps and I hope it's supported.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Peter Shurman: This is an interesting bill. I want to thank the member from Pickering–Scarborough East for his comments, many of which I echo. I don't think you're going to find a lot of opposition over here, collectively or individually, but I think that what I could say is, it's yet another bill that is more about what's not there than what is there. It begins to tinker with the pension situation in the province of Ontario. It nibbles at it, but it doesn't go where we have to go. I acknowledge that the member himself has signified that this is a piece of the puzzle and that there's more legislation to come.

I want to underscore a couple of points that he has made, not the least of which is the fact that there is a growing cohort of people called the baby boomers who are becoming seniors, of which that member and myself are a part. So we're looking not too far down the gun barrel before it comes to us. If you take a look at the statistics, the government knows, the opposition knows and, most of all, the people who live in the province of Ontario know that the vast majority are not going to have the money to continue to live in the style to which they've become accustomed when they get to pensionable age—and for many of us, that time is coming very quickly because of the growth of that cohort itself.

What we've got is a partial piece of legislation, and I would say that time here is of the essence, because if indeed we don't tackle this now, we're almost too late already. I take a look at people who have been responsible. I would number myself amongst those who have put the maximum amount into RSPs over the years because they don't have defined benefit plans—most of us don't have defined benefit plans; we're not members of the public sector, the “new elite,” as I like to call them, and we still don't have enough to be able to look ahead

five or 10 years at most and say, “Those RSPs are going to produce what we need,” or that the rules for those RSPs are going to be applied in such a way as to benefit us in the way that they have to. I don't want to see a new generation of—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Pickering–Scarborough East has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: Let me just very briefly thank the members, and maybe I'll mention them as I go through. If I don't, I'll catch them at the end.

The member from Simcoe–Grey: You're quite correct; this is enabling legislation that will address that very issue that you raised here. I had the opportunity to deal with that issue myself when I first arrived here with government services, at that time Management Board, and that was with GO Transit employees. But that had to be a one-off decision that was very, very difficult to achieve. So this will achieve that.

Certainly, the expectation will be between the superintendent, between FSCO, between the plans themselves—OMERS is a large organization. They will be in a good position to be able to communicate with their pension holders as to the options that are available to them or current employees. One would expect those organizations to be detailed enough to manage most of that, and I'm sure that you will be in touch with the paramedics who contacted you. If they're not aware now, I'm sure they will be very shortly, once we finish with this particular bill.

To the member from Hamilton East, I appreciate the debate here and in committee. There are occasions when the government doesn't necessarily agree with opposition motions; they might not fall in line with the government agenda at that point in the legislation. I know that has occurred on occasion, that we don't fully agree with some of the amendments brought forward by the opposition. But we continue to listen intently and always look for good amendments that we can actually implement.

To the member from Eglinton–Lawrence, thank you for your comments. I know you continue to have a strong interest in this matter, broadly, as do your constituents.

To the member from Thornhill, I think we're getting to that level sooner than anticipated—not sooner than we think—but, yes, there is more to do. I think we're all in agreement on that. After 20 years, we have to start somewhere. This is a good piece of legislation to start that. What's particularly important is that the dialogue has started and has become more focused.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Norm Miller: It's my pleasure to lead off third reading debate on Bill 236. I should say at the outset that the PC Party, the official opposition, will be supporting this bill.

It is a technical bill that is dealing with relatively minor changes to the rules to do with defined benefit pension plans. The sorts of things that it does are: It clarifies the benefits of plan members affected by layoffs

and it eliminates partial windups; it facilitates the restructuring of pension plans affected by corporate reorganizations—and that was something the parliamentary assistant was just talking about—while protecting benefit security for plan members and pensioners; it increases transparency and access to information for plan members and pensioners; it enhances regulatory oversight; it improves plan administration; and it reduces compliance costs.

Where we are right now in the process is, we've had second reading debate and the bill did go to committee. There were a number of amendments put forward at committee, about 50, most of which were the government's—some which were the NDP's and some which our party put forward. The government amendments were mainly of a technical nature, changing some dates and some terminology.

Certainly, the official opposition was there listening to those people who came before the committee, and we put forward some amendments that we thought made sense. I've spoken with pension members, both at the committee and in looking at this bill, and one of the issues they brought up was the issue of being able to know the status of their pension. They've worked their whole life and they're counting on this pension, and it seems to me, and I think it seems to those pension members, that they should be able to be involved with a pension advisory committee, and to have a pension advisory committee, but also be able to get information on the solvency of their particular pension, because they're going to be depending on that pension for their retirement years.

So the PC Party put forward amendments to recognize the input that we received. Unfortunately, the government voted down all of our amendments, but I would like to mention a couple of them. Because, as I say, a lot of the retired pension members would like to form a pension advisory committee so they can be more involved and know what the status of their committee is, we put forward an amendment that would require every pension plan—I'll read it: "Every pension plan is required to establish an advisory committee, and it shall include retired members of the pension plan." That's simply based on the fact that they're the people who have the most at stake in the pension plan.

1620

Also, we heard that the sponsors are not necessarily that keen about setting up a pension advisory committee. Sometimes privacy concerns are cited as a reason why they can't distribute names to assist in the formation of a pension advisory committee. I heard from groups like the Canadian Federation of Pensioners, who told me just how difficult it is to create a PAC. They said that even some of the sponsors think of it as being a nuisance. So that's why we put forward an amendment to require the establishment of an advisory committee, and that would then require the sponsor to be of assistance. As I say, that one, unfortunately, was voted down.

We also put forward an amendment to do with basically getting information out to pensioners. Our idea

was that a simple way to do it would be to make that information available in an electronic format, so we put forward an amendment that would make it possible: "The administrator of a pension plan shall ensure that information about an individual's benefits or entitlements under the pension plan is available to the individual over the Internet, and the administrator shall ensure that appropriate security measures are implemented to prevent unauthorized access to this information by others."

The sort of information would be that critical information to do with the solvency of the plan: "The administrator of a pension plan shall ensure that any report filed with the superintendent concerning the most recent solvency valuation of the pension plan is available to its members and retired members over the Internet."

This seemed to me to be a simple way to allow those members to know the status of something that's so important to them: their pension. Unfortunately, as I say, that one as well was voted down by the government members.

We also put forward an amendment to do with grow-in provisions—and I think that I had something here that I wanted to read into the record. What did I do with that? I may not be able to read that into the record because it's not handy to me. But there were certainly some real concerns from the sponsors of the cost of grow-in benefits.

I'll just read what a grow-in benefit is, because for those of us who aren't experts in pensions, it's not easy to understand. What is a grow-in benefit? Grow-in benefits are retirement enhancements provided to terminated members, on plan windup, whose age plus years of total service equal at least 55. Such persons are entitled to early retirement benefits provided under the plan that they would have grown into had both the plan and their employment continued until their early retirement date.

This is generally considered to be costly to plan sponsors. It's only found in Ontario and Nova Scotia, and Nova Scotia is planning to do away with grow-in benefits. And here's what I was looking for. There were groups like the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association and the Ontario Public School Boards' Association that came before the committee to point out—and I'll read from their submission:

"The grow-in provisions of Bill 236 as they currently stand will have a further negative impact on OMERS' financial situation. An estimated amount of up to \$1 billion will be on top of the existing \$6-billion-plus deficit that OMERS needs to deal with over the next four years. This cost must not be legislated upon the OMERS plan especially at a time when the OMERS plan can least afford additional and unnecessary costs."

They showed why a MEPP or a JSPP—a multi-employer pension plan or a jointly managed pension plan—require a different regulatory regime:

"Plans like OMERS (public sector MEPPs/JSPPs) require a different regulatory regime than single employer pension plans ... because of their joint governance structure." And I think this is key: "OMERS' two

corporate boards, each with half of the board members representing the employers and half representing the employees, are the best joint decision-makers to determine the benefit composition and subsequent contribution rates of the OMERS plan. This governance structure must not be overridden with provincial legislation.”

They go on to say, “The 2008 report of the Expert Commission on Pensions in Ontario specifically proposed that multi-employer plans and jointly sponsored plans”—that’s the JSPPs—“like OMERS, be exempted from the grow-in requirement. The rationale for this recommendation is that when parties jointly sponsor and govern a plan, share risks and bargain collectively on early retirement benefits, there is no need for additional legislative protection.”

So, based on that specific recommendation, the recommendation of the Arthurs report, we put forward an amendment that the grow-in provision does not apply with respect to jointly sponsored pension plans or a multi-employer plan. Unfortunately, that was voted down, although there is still a possibility with the bill that it can happen, even without this provision.

So those are a sample of some of the amendments that the official opposition put forward.

There are other concerns that I could ask the parliamentary assistant to listen to and see whether they are fully addressed in the current form of the bill, because I’m not positive whether they are or not. The member from Simcoe–Grey has brought up issues to do with the paramedics in his riding.

I received a letter from MPAC employees and I’m going to read it. As the member from Simcoe–Grey pointed out, they used to be government of Ontario employees. Now they’re MPAC employees. So they’ve got this joint pension and they still have some questions. I’ll read this letter from Ron Franklin of Mississauga, Ontario, to do with MPAC employees. I think most of their considerations are addressed in this bill, but they do have some finer points. Here’s the letter:

“It’s our understanding the proposed legislative changes are a follow-up on the November 2008 report and recommendations of the Ontario Expert Commission on Pensions, such as contained in section 5.3 titled ‘The Effect of Restructuring on Active Members and Retirees.’ In this regard, we take it the government’s reform package is intended to include and address such significant long-standing issues as past investments and the ensuing split pension problems of Ontarians.

“Their submission to the expert panel detailed how many people have been directly and prejudicially impacted by their past divestment from the OPS, as well as by the pension decisions not of their own making or choice, and advised some possible options at resolution.

“The solution that is fundamentally fair, reasonable and what many MPAC employees are seeking is a merging/consolidation of their separate split pensions under one of the OPS plans, either OPSEU Trust (‘OPTrust’) or the public service pension plan/Ontario Pension Board (‘OPB’). As indicated by those employees

this would take into account salary increases under the successor employer MPAC, and ensure that such employees and prospective pensioners would not lose their existing entitlement to the post-retirement health and dental benefits for those covered through their previous employment with the Ontario government.

“With respect to the concept of merging the split pensions, the Minister of Government and Consumer Services had written the Chair of MPAC’s board of directors in June of last year advising in part: ‘If divested MPAC employees withdraw or transfer their OPS pension assets and thereby terminate OPS pension entitlement status, they will forfeit access to future post-retirement insurance coverage.’ Under the circumstances it is our understanding that a viable solution would be the consolidation and transferring of the split pension assets to one of the OPS plans, ‘OPTrust’ or ‘OPB.’

“The chair of MPAC’s board of directors wrote on January 15, 2009, referencing the expert commission’s call upon the government to promptly address the pension arrangements for groups of public service employees affected by past divestments and transfers. MPAC’s letter stresses an immediate urgency to the matters and advises some employees have chosen to defer their retirements”—and I know the member from Simcoe–Grey had mentioned that. There are some of the ambulance drivers, as well, who are deferring retirement until this is resolved—“while awaiting a response from the Ontario government to provide a remedy to the situation.

“We would greatly appreciate it if you would advise how the government plans to resolve this important and long-standing split pension issue for pensioners and prospective pensioners working at MPAC, and how the relief will be implemented.

“Ontarians to be given a couple of options depending on their circumstances, such as the freedom of choice on an individualized basis of consolidating/transferring their split pension assets to either the previous original plan or to the successor plan. At the same time, this would give them the option of leaving the split pensions as they are if they do not wish to consolidate their pensions under one plan or the other. In fact, many at MPAC have been seeking legislative amendments which would, in essence, include/enable the OPTrust plan and the OMERS plan to enter into voluntary individualized transfer agreements to consolidate all their pension assets/service back under the one OPS plan ‘OPTrust.’”

1630

That letter is signed by a number of MPAC employees, the affected group from Richmond Hill and Mississauga.

Perhaps the parliamentary assistant can respond to that concern—I’m sure he followed all that in the letter—to confirm that their concerns are addressed to their satisfaction.

This bill, as I mentioned, is technical. It’s dealing with defined benefit pension plans. There’s so much more out there that’s not covered in it. It really doesn’t address the bigger issues of retirement income challenges, and that’s

really the majority of people out there. That's 60% to 70% of the people who either don't have a defined benefit plan or don't have a defined contribution plan or don't have any retirement savings at all.

Certainly, the trend in the private sector—and there's a hugely different world out there between the private sector and the public sector. We're getting kind of the gold standard for the public sector and something very different in the private sector. In the private sector, the trend is toward defined contribution plans; that is, plans where the employee and usually the employer will contribute to the retirement plan each month but the value is not backstopped. It's whatever you invest in that plan. It's very much like what MPPs at Queen's Park have. You might pick a mutual fund that the plan is invested in, and then you have a particular value that goes up over time, but when you retire, that value is what your retirement is. That's what the private sector is moving toward. I met with a large Ontario unionized company this week at Queen's Park. I won't name the company, but in the past they had a defined benefit plan, and now for all new hires they're moving to defined contribution plans.

That's what's happening in the private sector predominantly, where you have a plan at all. There are a lot of people who have no plan whatsoever, people who are just putting off or not thinking about saving money for retirement.

The most you can contribute, if you are earning money and putting it into an RSP, for example, is 18% a year, compared to the value of most of the public sector defined benefit plans, which is about 35% of your income per year—so it's more than double. In the public sector, in most cases, the defined benefit plan is backstopped by the government. So if you're a teacher or you're a police officer, you are going to receive that money unless the government really gets us into financial dire straits like some countries such as Greece currently are. We aren't quite there yet in Ontario. We're moving that way with a \$21.3-billion deficit, but we're not quite there yet.

This bill is not dealing with those bigger issues of retirement income, and those really are the bigger issues. How do you get more people to plan and more people to save and think about their retirement?

I met with the Association of Canadian Pension Management. I thought they had a lot of very positive ideas, and I'd like to get some of them on the record. They made a presentation to me and briefed me, as the finance critic, on some of the bigger issues. What did they say? They said they thought they needed to:

- rebalance the debate to focus on retirement income;
- encourage the formation of more workplace plans and savings options for Canadians, which is critical to the retirement income debate;
- enhance, protect and sustain the security of pension plans and retirement income options.

What is the current dilemma? Insufficient savings and a lack of workplace plans are the main impediments to

adequate retirement income. If you're self-employed, unless you're just specifically putting it into an RSP, you wouldn't likely have a plan. Some individuals and families are not saving enough. They're intimidated by the amount they think they need to retire comfortably. They find pensions confusing and complex, and fewer employers are offering pension plans as the current rules and policies make this more difficult.

There's not enough of a pan-Canadian approach. I think that's important: that there's fragmentation and different rules across the country. We're dealing with one fairly technical bill here to do with defined benefit plans. Well, the rules are different across the country, and I mentioned how Ontario is unique in that it has grow-in options. It's about the only province now that does it; I think Nova Scotia had grow-in options. Also, Ontario's the only province that has the pension benefits guarantee fund, and maybe I'll come back to that a little bit later. You might be working in Ontario right now, but next month you might be transferred to BC. So the more it's a Canada-wide approach to pensions, the better. The more transferable they are, the better.

It should be noted, though—I mean, we have one of the best retirement systems in the world at a basic level, and those are national programs: old age security; the guaranteed income supplement, GIS; the mandated Canada pension plan benefits; and voluntary workplace and individual savings. That's sort of a solid base, and it works well. But workplace plans and retirement saving options are the best way to meet the needs of the vast majority of Canadians. So those people at the very low level of income have those plans that I just mentioned that provide a sort of base level of income in retirement. It's when you get into the vast middle class that we have the problem where people aren't saving enough for retirement.

What is the path ahead? We need to focus on how to support and encourage Canadians to plan and save more for their own retirement. We need to encourage employers to keep offering or start offering pension plans that meet the needs of employees in the 21st century. And governments working together would best facilitate these actions. I think the federal government is engaged in this debate, as are many provincial governments. The national approach, I believe, is the best approach.

The Association of Canadian Pension Management says, "Don't tinker with government programs such as CPP, which do the job of providing a basic level of income for all Canadians," and they think it doesn't need to be expanded. "The reality for many people is that an adequate retirement can be achieved for less than the oft-stated retirement income goal of 70% of pre-retirement income." That's been the target that's been set in the past, and what they're saying is that that's too high, that most people don't need 70% of their working income to be comfortable in their retirement. But it's the current pension rules rather than the lack of employer willingness that are discouraging new workplace plans and frustrating existing employer and employee plans. It's

those rules that are stopping the employers from being able to set up plans that would then benefit their employees.

They're recommending a balanced approach. They say, "Let's be realistic about what Canadians really need to save for retirement"—so lower than that 70%. Employers need to be kept in the game, and consumer protection must be an important part of any reforms. Those pan-Canadian solutions recognize that Canadians' ability to obtain adequate retirement income should not rely on where they live or whether their job is in the public or private sector.

But the big challenge is expanding coverage so that more people have retirement income or are planning for a retirement income. That means more defined contribution plans, new options, more economies of scale and participation by the self-employed—because there are a lot of small businesses, as you would know, Madame Speaker, that don't have a plan. Expanding coverage should be a voluntary decision by employers, employees and the self-employed, utilizing auto-enrolment with opt-out mechanisms, such as used in the United States and coming in the United Kingdom. That's where you're automatically signed up, and then you have to make a decision to opt out of it. I think that makes a lot of sense, because the last thing many of us want to do is—we have other things we'd rather spend our own money on today versus putting aside for our retirement a few years in the future. We may want to buy that new motorcycle or put the addition on the house. Let's face it, there's always something we can find to spend the money on that we may want or that will come before making the decision to put that money away for years in the future for our retirement.

1640

"Expanding coverage would benefit from efforts by government and pension providers to help demystify decisions for people, while reducing the perceived 'sticker shock' resulting from the historical focus on the 70% replacement figure"—so they're saying to lower that figure.

The means to expanded coverage: "The ACPM believes that several large plans operating multi-jurisdictionally would provide the flexibility and choice of savings options that employers and individuals need, while encouraging diversification of capital, economies of scale and competition benefits." I agree with that point.

"Another government mandated payroll tax is not what the economy needs, especially when, for many, there are better ways to prepare for retirement." So that would be, I guess, perhaps an additional CPP plan.

ACPM is agnostic on publicly run versus privately run plans as long as it is not only a public plan, so it's not just an expansion of the CPP. They're not in favour of CPP involvement in supplemental plans, if there is risk of creating one large mega-fund. Private sector creativity and expertise is the best way to develop choices and educate Canadians.

The focus should be on expanded coverage, and there are many different changes required to make that happen; many outside of the jurisdiction of the Parliament of Ontario. Consequential changes to the Income Tax Act and federal and provincial pension standards legislation are required to enhance the ability to provide defined contribution options; encourage new models that combine elements of defined benefit and defined contribution, like target benefits; encourage more multi-employer plans; promote participation through auto-enrol with an opt-out provision; enable individuals to join plans without employer sponsors, so that could be the self-employed person; and provide the opportunity for large plan administrators to service smaller plans, because generally these plans, economies of scale, make a huge difference.

They also suggest promoting mandatory access:

"Automatic enrolment with opt-out can encourage increased participation while ensuring the flexibility and choice needed to reflect different savings potential and approaches over a lifetime.

"Models exist in other jurisdictions either requiring employers to offer plans unless they opt out, in which case employees can still join a plan, or by automatically requiring employees be in a plan unless they opt out." These are things that we should be looking at going into the future.

"Proposals for a default publicly mandated plan should be deferred to allow private sector to provide access and options for Canadians." So they obviously feel that a CPP-only option or public option is not the optimal choice.

I've talked a bit about the specific provisions of this bill, and more broadly the bigger issues that need to be addressed. Some of the things not addressed in this bill: It does not deal with the circumstances—the future, bigger choices I outlined; it does not deal with the majority of people who have no pension; the government has not created more opportunities for savings so that more Ontarians could put money away for retirement; and the government has not removed mutual fund management fees from the long list of services that will be subject to the HST.

I think this is a point that needs expanding upon, and that is that one of the things that's being taxed with the new HST—for the majority of people out there who are saving by having a registered retirement savings plan, the HST will apply to the management fees on that mutual fund. This will have a tremendous negative effect on the amount that you're able to save in that RRSP. Canada is unique in the world of value-added taxes—and there are quite a few countries that do have value-added taxes—in terms of applying that tax, the HST, to the management fees of mutual funds. So it further puts those people who aren't in a defined benefit plan, the 60% to 70% of the people, at a further disadvantage in terms of trying to save enough money.

This bill also doesn't deal with the Nortel workers out there who are faced with the possibility of seeing greatly

diminished retirement savings. The government has, in another bill and in the budget, put money into the pension benefits guarantee fund. Ontario is unique in the country in having a pension benefits guarantee fund. It will provide up to \$1,000 a month if the defined benefit plan fails. The way it's supposed to work is that it's supposed to be funded by the companies and the employees that would benefit from it. It's in a negative cash flow situation, as so many things this government is dealing with are, so the government has recently moved \$500 million into the pension benefits guarantee fund. I think that's specifically to do with Nortel workers. If I was a cynic, I'd say it was because there was recently a by-election in the Ottawa area, which is where many of the retired Nortel workers live. But this bill doesn't address the bigger issue of what's going to happen to all those Nortel workers. That provision just means that they would receive up to \$1,000 a month, which, for many of the Nortel workers, would be a big drop from what they were expecting to receive.

There's quite a bit that's not covered by the bill. We are generally supportive of it and think it's an improvement for these defined benefit plans that it affects, so we will be supporting it. This is the easy part of the pension changes. The government has said they're going to introduce another bill. I don't expect we'll see that until probably the last week before the Legislature rises, so it would likely not be getting debated with the bigger, more challenging issues until the fall.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to this bill this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd also like to convey my concerns that the member of the opposition stated, in his frustration that some of their amendments—in fact, all of their amendments—were not addressed and accepted in any way, shape or form. I also feel the frustration that all the amendments we brought before the committee were also shot down and not dealt with, and some of them were very important to making this bill stronger. Constructive criticism from very large organizations in the province has been totally ignored by the government on this situation.

The government says that in the fall they're going to come forward with more legislation. I'm not quite sure. I certainly hope it's going to be a lot more than what was done here because, speaking about the PBGF fund, which is the most important thing that is facing Ontario and Ontarians, it hasn't even been mentioned or dealt with in this situation. That's the part of the bill that would have given an immediate sense of security and relief to the hundreds of thousands of people who have pension plans that are struggling and could possibly go under. Obviously, the money situation was not dealt with in this bill whatsoever. It's housekeeping and some reforms in reference to vesting and other such things, which are good. Any kind of movement on pension reform is good, but it doesn't deal with the problem that's facing

hundreds and hundreds of thousands of Ontarians. As mentioned by the former speaker, the Nortel workers are a perfect example, and I'll get into more detail about that.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I'm pleased to have a couple of minutes to respond to the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka and his comments. Let me first say that I'm pleased to hear that the Tory caucus is generally supportive of the bill. I understood that to say that they would be voting in favour. I can appreciate that any time when the opposition is generally supportive, that's a big step from the standpoint of government legislation.

1650

He made a number of comments on a variety of areas. I'd welcome a copy of the correspondence, if it wasn't sent to the ministry officials from the MPAC folks. I certainly would undertake, if it's not there now, to ensure that it's before them for a more wholesome review of that. The issue around health benefits is one that, in my discussions initially with MPAC—as I'm sure he had as well—they were concerned about, as well as the transfer of assets. This is a nuance, for me, that sort of came up late in the discussion, but I'm anxious to see the copy of it. I hadn't seen that particular correspondence and would be happy to forward that if it's not with the officials already.

He spent some time speaking to the issue of retirement income adequacy, if I can call it that. That's part of this broader discussion. Whether it's the OAS or the GIS, CPP, workplace plans or individual savings, clearly they need discussion, as he's articulated. It's going on across the country and we should be a strong part of it. It's the reason the Premier stood up and has called for a national summit with federal leadership. We need to have this discussion with Ontarians, with Canadians about what the right model is and how it might look. We look forward to that discussion, as I'm sure he does as well, over the coming months, as the case might be.

Certainly, the budget did identify some \$500 million into the pension benefits guarantee fund, which is obviously an underfunded model. This certainly will help to provide some relief in that regard for those who find, if they find, that they have to draw on it—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Comments and questions?

Mr. Peter Shurman: I'm glad to add my voice to that of my colleague from Parry Sound-Muskoka. We've had many talks one on one, he and I, about the state of pensions in the province of Ontario, and one of the lines that keeps getting repeated, not just between he and I but, I think, amongst people who are at least over 50 and certainly those over 60, is, "Isn't it great how people can work longer these days?" Well, on the one hand, from a medical perspective it's great that people can work longer, but thank goodness we can because we have to. I think that's the basis for the broad discussion about pensions, not the specific discussions, necessarily, that we're having today.

I thank the member for responding to many of the points that the government has made in terms of the technical responses. I can imagine that, for those people who are watching at home, you've got not a heck of a lot to do because this is boring stuff. It's necessary stuff, but it's boring in terms of the technicalities of it when the nub of this thing does go back to that original question.

Let me put this question: If the government is as interested as it says it is in reforming pensions, is bringing forth more legislation on the issue of pensions—I'd like to recall very briefly, because I haven't got much time, the fact that I spoke recently to IFIC, the people who sell mutual funds in the province. They want to know, because essentially mutual funds are nothing more than private pensions that people are buying for themselves, why there is an onerous addition to the issue of buying mutual funds called the harmonized sales tax. I know that we're not debating that any more and that it's coming into being on July 1, but isn't that an additional negative towards people who can ill afford it and, ultimately, are going to have to be bailed out by we, the people of Ontario?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

Mr. Jeff Leal: I listened very carefully to the—I thought—very informative comments from the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka. He's certainly very involved in his file. I think that, by and large, there's interest on all sides of House in pension reform. I think today there's no sort of issue that has seized the nation as much, particularly as a result of the meltdown of the financial structures south of the border. Many people who had invested in RRSPs and in mutual funds witnessed the value of those funds declining significantly. When you have the opportunity to talk about the fact that 65% of the people who live in the province of Ontario do not have a defined benefit pension plan and the work that's being done by the federal finance minister, Minister Flaherty, his round table across Canada to solicit opinions about the future of pension plans in this country, it's something that we all should take a real interest in. Certainly, we've got to start, in elementary school, to get the principles in place to encourage savings so that when we get into our late fifties and our sixties, we in fact have prepared adequately for those days when we won't be in the workforce.

This is the first bill of two that will be presented to this House as a result of recommendations that were put forward through the Arthurs report, which was a very comprehensive review of pensions in the province of Ontario. Indeed, as I indicated, this is an issue where we see that all parties in this House have come together in the best interests of Ontarians to make sure they have adequate pension funds down the road.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

The member from Parry Sound–Muskoka has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Norm Miller: Thank you to the members from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, Thornhill, Pickering–

Scarborough East and Peterborough, who made comments on my speech.

I know that the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek was involved as a member of the NDP. Certainly they did, as he pointed out, put forward many different amendments at committee level that were all voted down, but they did work hard on that, and he spoke passionately about many of them. I know he has a large constituency, particularly of unionized workers, who have some real concerns. I'd say that some of those private companies are the ones that are most at risk as well.

The member from Thornhill pointed out that the HST will apply to management fees on mutual funds, and that is an additional negative. It does make a chasm between those people on their own trying to save money and those people who happen to be lucky enough in the public sector to have a defined benefit plan. It makes the divide even larger.

The member from Peterborough talked about what's going on across the country. As I said in my remarks, I do think that many of the solutions to the bigger questions to do with pensions are pan-Canada solutions, and the best solution is one that applies to the whole country.

He also did mention that young people should be learning about financial literacy, and I would completely agree with that. In fact, I've had some people in the financial business in my riding from the Parry Sound area writing to me, suggesting that there should be more in the curriculum to do with financial literacy so people know how to plan for their retirement, but also just some fairly basic aspects of financial management. So I would completely agree with that.

I thank the Legislature for the opportunity to speak this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate.

Mr. Paul Miller: Before I get into the details of the bill, I want to use this opportunity to talk about what the NDP will be looking for in terms of pension reform before the end of June.

First, with only 35% of Ontarians covered by an occupational pension plan, there's a clear need for expanded pension coverage for the other 65% of Ontarians. Ideally, the way this would be done would be to increase the benefit levels of the Canada pension plan. This would draw on existing economies of scale, risk-sharing and the administration efficiencies of the plan. The Ontario NDP joins with the federal NDP and the Canadian Labour Congress in the campaign for an expanded national universal pension plan in the form of an enhanced CPP.

We also support those parties who are calling for an increase in the guaranteed income supplement and for reform of Canada's bankruptcy laws so that pension plan members are ranked above other creditors in bankruptcy proceedings.

That said, the issue of expanding pension coverage is an urgent one. We in the Ontario NDP do not believe that the Harper government is going to move to expand coverage under the Canada pension plan. Therefore, we

believe that there is an important role to be played at the provincial level in greatly expanding workplace pension coverage. That is why, with the finance ministers' pension meeting coming up in June, it is essential to know where the McGuinty government stands on this very important subject.

We know where we stand. It's called the Ontario retirement plan, but we have no idea where the McGuinty government stands on pension coverage for the 65% of Ontarians without a workplace pension plan. What we need is an Ontario focus, a made-in-Ontario solution, not reliance on federal action that we all know is not even on the books. The NDP believes that Ontario should move ahead with other provinces and develop an employment-based pension plan for all working Ontarians who presently lack occupational coverage.

1700

Before I get into the specifics of how such a plan would work, I'd like to talk a bit about the benefits of such a plan. First, and most obviously, the Ontario retirement plan would deal with the roughly 65% of Ontarians who presently have no workplace pension plan coverage.

Second, in the Ontario retirement plan, the band of income that the contribution rate would be assessed against would be different from that of the current Canada pension plan. A broader band of income would allow for a higher benefit for plan members earning over \$47,200 in 2010 dollars. This responds to exactly the kind of replacement rate issues that pension expert Bob Baldwin identified in his report to the Minister of Finance that was tabled in Whitehorse in December.

Thirdly, an Ontario retirement plan would be used to further consolidation of a fragmented workplace pension system. For example, Ontario has over 6,500 workplace plans, many of them very small. Many might elect to integrate into a larger Ontario plan which has at its base two thirds of the workforce. Bigger is better in some cases.

Fourth, an Ontario plan would allow for the transfer of RRSPs, which could be used to purchase past service credits for the basic benefit. This would allow older workers who would not ordinarily be able to earn the full benefit to receive more than they would have otherwise.

Here's how it works. An Ontario retirement plan would be a publicly run targeted benefit plan, much like the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan, the Healthcare of Ontario Pension Plan and the Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology Pension Plan. In order to maximize participation, every employee not enrolled in a workplace pension plan would be automatically enrolled in the Ontario retirement plan. But the plan is not mandatory. If you have a better way to plan for your retirement, you don't have to take part in the Ontario retirement plan. If, as your life changes, you decide that the Ontario retirement plan is something you can use, you can opt in. Employees and employers would be expected to contribute equally to the plan. Contribution rates for employees would be phased in over a five-year period depending

upon economic circumstances and somewhat longer phasing might be considered for employers. Unlike a defined contribution plan for a group RRSP, the assets of the plan would be invested for the plan as a whole and not on an individual basis. That results in far more security for the plan members. The maximum benefit for the plan would be between \$600 and \$700 per month in 2010 dollars. And because many current members of the workforce would not have sufficient years in the plan to receive the maximum benefit, plan members would be able to increase their normal benefit through a retroactive purchase of past service credits.

In the new world of work, people are increasingly mobile. Many will work a number of jobs in their lifetime. We can choose to let them sink or swim, or we can step up with sensible solutions like the NDP Ontario retirement plan that makes their lives better. And I might add that this plan has received great support throughout the province from many groups: intellectuals, unions, businesses. We've had lots of positive responses to this plan.

Let me cover some other key issues. That was the coverage issue, but Harry Arthurs also came up with a number of good suggestions regarding strengthening the existing pension system.

First, the NDP supports Arthurs' recommendation for establishing an Ontario pension agency. We believe that pooling, administering, investing and disbursing stranded pensions would be an important role for this agency. In our opinion, an Ontario pension agency would pretty much solve the problem that Nortel pensioners face now. Nortel, AbitibiBowater, and CanWest Global Communications all could benefit from an Ontario pension agency. We were hoping to see an Ontario pension agency in this first package right here in Bill 236, but it's nowhere to be seen. Will it be in the second package? I wait with bated breath. I'm not even sure that the government knows that. Will there even be a second package this session? They say yes. Who knows?

Second, at only a \$1,000 level of monthly pension benefits eligible for protection by the pension benefits guarantee fund, it's completely inadequate. Why I say that is, if you take the Nortel situation, for instance, some of those workers had 40 years' service. They had pensions ranging between \$1,600 and \$3,800 a month—\$4,000 a month. So when their plan wrapped up—it failed—the equity wasn't there. It wound down. Their fear is, it's coming to a closure quickly. The Ontario government did step up to the plate with a little money for the pension benefits guarantee fund—very little.

If I worked my whole life and I was entitled to \$3,800 at the end of my life in deferred wages—my money; in other words, I took benefit advantages over wages that I would have gotten. That's what these people did, and now you're telling people in their 60s, "Oh, by the way, your \$3,800 isn't there. You won't be getting it. But we're a good government; we're going to give you up to \$1,000?" So what do you say to hundreds of pensioners who come to us and say, "Where's my other \$2,800?"

"Well, I'm sorry. It's not there. You're out of luck." "But I worked my whole life for this. This was my planned retirement. Now I might have to work till I'm 75, if I live that long."

It's a pretty scary situation. This has not been dealt with by this bill; it hasn't even been touched—about increasing it. Even Harry Arthurs, who was hired by the Liberals, recommended that this pension plan be boosted to \$2,500 a month—their own expert. Not a word about raising it in this first bill. Nothing. Pretty scary stuff.

We believe that, over time, the monthly guarantee covered by the PGBF should be increased to a maximum of \$2,500. We don't expect the government to be magicians. We don't expect them to increase it to \$2,500 immediately. It's going to be over a period of time. We're well aware of that. We can't expect that much input of resources that quickly. We're realists, but we also know it's deferred wages that these people are owed, and the government has to step up to the plate to make sure that, eventually, they get the money they're owed. I don't see any of that in here. That hasn't happened since 1980, by the way; that pension benefits guarantee fund hasn't been changed since 1980.

While the NDP agrees that the basis on which the levy will be paid by plan sponsors is a complex matter and that a phase-in period is necessary, we are extremely disappointed that this key Arthurs recommendation is nowhere to be seen in the first package, and I'm not quite sure it's going to show up in the second package. Again, we would have liked to have seen movement on this issue in this package, and we expect to see the issue addressed in the next package, whenever that may occur.

Don't get me wrong; there are a couple of good things in this bill. The NDP supports the Arthurs recommendation that all active plan members should be immediately vested for all accrued pension benefits. We've supported this all along. That was done. It was done, at no cost to the government. As you know, as things now stand, if an employee moves on before two years are up, he or she loses their employee contribution to their pension plan.

It's a small move. I'm not quite sure how much of an investment the government made in this—probably nothing. It will probably be part of the plan. But something should have changed years ago, and we're glad that this part of the present package is in there, but we also have real concerns with the package and we are disappointed that the government ignored our amendments in these areas. These are the very areas that unions have worked on for years—valuable input, valuable material that could have been used by the government; totally ignored. All our amendments were totally ignored. Sad.

We're very concerned with the changes in the surplus distribution on windup. This change in the act is a significant loss of entitlement for plan members. Currently, section 79 requires both that there be an agreement for surplus distribution and that employer entitlement to surplus must be established. We acknowledge that there has been difficulty in the applications of this section of the act, but we still believe that this wording makes things much, much worse.

1710

There would have been a greater basis for this change if the government had followed the Arthurs recommendation on vesting, grow-in rights, and if the PGBF recommendation for an increase to \$2,500 a month were implemented. Only the vesting and grow-in recommendations were implemented in this bill. The PGBF recommendation so far has been ignored. This is not Harry Arthurs's so-called "delicate balance."

Putting it bluntly, the NDP believes that the surplus should only go to employers on windup if the employer has a clear entitlement to the surplus. As our amendment was voted down, we will continue to oppose the provision as things now stand.

We also have problems regarding the asset transfer provisions. Transfers between plans need to be as simple and transparent as possible. The basic principle of preservation of benefits and commuted value is necessary to ensure fairness and impartiality, and individual choice needs to be preserved.

There are a number of problems with the way asset transfers are addressed in this act currently. Most significantly, current provisions require the predecessor and successor plans to provide the same benefits, and individuals are not given any choice with respect to the transfers—unacceptable. As a matter of principle, the legislation should have incorporated individual choice, as reciprocal agreements do now, so that plan members can make a decision, based on full information, to stay in the original plan or move to the successor plan. The proposed changes to the act remove the requirement that benefits be identical. However, individual members still have no choice with respect to transfers.

In addition, in the public sector, the interest of the original employer in an asset transfer for past service is questionable at best. In the public sector, large independently administered plans generally deal with voluntary transfers under a major Ontario pension plan's reciprocal agreement that requires no employer expenditure of time or resources. We believe that this reciprocal agreement provides a better model for transfers in the public sector than the proposed agreements between the original and successor employers.

We moved a very constructive amendment on precisely this issue and we were very, very disappointed that this amendment was voted down.

In summary, we are in the midst of a historic debate in this province and indeed in this country. The debate is over the future of retirement savings in this province and this country. We in the NDP have made it quite clear where we stand. We are on the side of the public defined pension benefits plans. The problem is that no one knows where the members across the floor stand.

When I want to talk about defined pension plans, I want to use HOOPP as an example, a hospital worker plan. A lot of people today are moving toward contributory plans, which I think are going to be a disaster in the end. But the defined pension plan by HOOPP, even through the recession, managed to have a 96% funded

rate. They were self-administered: They have their own actuaries. They have their own accountants. They run a solid plan. We also know how huge the teachers' plan is and all the investments they've made. I think they even own the Toronto Maple Leafs. It's huge. They invested in gold. They have invested all over the world. Their plan is so big that I'm a little worried, because I've heard in this House the too-big-to-fail thing again, and I'm not quite sure. A lot of these so-called too-big-to-fail companies and pension plans are certainly in trouble today, and we witness it every day. Every month, there's a new administrative pension problem, and pensions are going under and workers are being—how would I put it? They're being shafted by the employers, by protection, by insurance companies, by the government. They're losing their job entitlement wages. They're losing deferred wages which they earned their whole life. They're saying, "I'm sorry; there's no protection for you. You're out of luck."

I really find this amazing, because the other day, the Minister of Consumer Services said that some things don't fall under her mandate. I think pensions should fall under her mandate, because that affects the consumers. The consumers will have no money to spend if their pension plans are in trouble. The consumers will be in rough shape, and I can see that if this government doesn't move more quickly—and not only this government; right across Canada—we're going to have a social nightmare in 20 years. Because of the baby boomers and all of the pension plans that are folding and going under, we are moving in the direction of a welfare state. We are moving in that direction if we don't do something about pensions—

Interjection: Nobody to pay.

Mr. Paul Miller: —with nobody to pay the bills, because there are not enough people working; there are not enough babies being born; there are not enough people entering the workforce to sustain the demands of our age group and the ones just behind us.

When you think about it, 65% of Ontarians don't have any workplace pension plan, so some of them had their RRSPs, relying on the market. We've seen what the market did. I think a lot of people, and I imagine even people in this House, lost up to 40% at one point: pretty scary stuff when you don't have a defined pension plan, when that was your pension plan and now it has been hit by market conditions.

That's why we need an Ontario plan. That's why we need another backup, because I'm not overly assured that Mr. Harper is going to fully fund, as the NDP and other parties have asked, to double the CPP. I can't see it. I can see maybe a small increase over a period of years, but not to the point where it's going to help a guy with 40 years at Nortel who went from \$2,800 down to \$1,000. It's not going to help that gentleman. It's not going to give him peace of mind. That gentleman will not be relaxing in Florida. He might be working: driving a car at a pharmacy, delivering drugs, because he cannot afford to retire. He cannot not work. I see more and more of this

going on in our province every day. There are people coming into my office saying, "Mr. Miller, what am I going to do?", and the only answer I can see is that we've got to start to do something to create a plan in Ontario where they can buy credits to give them something additional.

It may not seem like a lot, but \$500 to \$700 could be the difference between an elderly person being forced out of their home because they can't afford to pay either their utilities, their municipal taxes or what other bills they have—because, trust me, as we all know, if you don't have a good income, don't have good investments and you're not in the top 25% of earners in this province, you can't live on old age security, Canada pension and the supplement. I don't know anyone in this room who could live on \$1,500 a month and maintain their lifestyle. No possible way. That would not only be eaten up by their hydro bills, all their other utilities and their food, but they may see their house go up.

Ask yourself this question: Why has North America now got reverse mortgages? Hmm. Because elderly people are broke and they have to dip into their house, which they might have wanted to leave to their kids. They can't now; they're spending it, and all these finance people are moving up to take part of their house. You can actually borrow up to, I think, 40% of your house. They even advertise that: "We'll lend you up to 40% of your house." Depending on your lifestyle, whether you require it for medications that aren't registered or covered, whether you're helping your kids because they don't have a job or your grandkids because they need money for college, whatever you're doing, most likely the money you borrow in a reverse mortgage is going to go towards helping the rest of your family, not giving you the lifestyle that they show on TV where you're headed to the Bahamas. Not happening. Not realistic.

That's what's going on in Canada. I am absolutely offended that this province and this country are not stepping up for people who have earned defined—they've earned their wages. Instead of taking an increase, they took pension credits. It was part of their negotiated package: "When I'm 65, I'll get so much a month. I can add it to my old age pension, I can add to it my Canada pension, and I can live pretty well. I can pass a little on to my kids when I go." It's not happening, as witnessed by the Nortels.

1720

What do you tell a 70-year-old man who's in your office in tears? He and his wife are forced to sell their house. They're forced to live in smaller accommodations. That wasn't in the plan. The plan was that I worked for 40 years, I saved my money, and my wife works. We retire; we travel a bit before we die, maybe. We might buy that car we always wanted. You always see the insurance companies advertising on TV: Freedom 55, this and that, and people driving around on motorcycles and cars and all that. It's not realistic.

When pension plans fail, there are no avenues—none—for people to take. The doors close on their

fingers. They have nowhere to go. They have no one to appeal to. They can't even go to their government for help, and that tells me that there's something drastically wrong in this province. It tells me that the people in this chamber have got to do something to help their fellow Ontarians, and I'm talking hundreds of thousands. That's not even dealing with the people who are below the poverty level: 20% of the people in my riding are living below the poverty level. They don't even think about pension reform. They don't even think about pensions. They're just trying to put food on the table every day. Those people need an avenue, so when they get to be 65, they're not in an even worse situation than they are now. They need this government to step up to the plate and do something too.

The days of a small minority of people living high off the hog has got to end. We all deserve; we all took part in building this province. The people of this province deserve some dignity in retirement. They deserve decent nutrition in their retirement. They should be able to have a roof over their head and at least pay their utilities. We all deserve that, and I don't think anyone in this room would argue that. But the way things are going, it's going to be a horror story in the next 20 years unless we move now to reform pension plans, to stop these huge payouts to corporate people when I've got people starving—a single mother coming into my office with nowhere to go with two kids, kicked out of their apartment because they can't afford their apartment. Then I see the government spending \$2 million, \$3 million a day on consultants. How do you explain to those people that these people in Toronto are doing that? They say to me, "Do they care about me?" I say, "You'd have to ask them," because they really don't know. They think that these people are living on a different planet.

These things are going on and they're going to continue to go on until we do something. I firmly believe that in the fall, when they come forward with their second package of pension reform, there should definitely be something in there for the PBGF fund to protect defined pension plans. But, more importantly, there should be something for the 65% of Ontarians who don't have anything: zilch, zero, no pension plan. They say, "Oh, well, they can buy RRSPs." Trust me, if you're making below \$30,000 a year, you're not buying RRSPs; what you're buying—if you can afford it—is pills, because you haven't got the proper nutrition, so that you don't have to become a statistic in the hospital situation.

I really firmly believe that we have got to move ahead more quickly. Within the next two or three years, I would expect to see some major changes in pension reform from the province and from the feds, for that matter. I'm not going to let them off, either. They can do something in Ottawa, too. The CPP, the old age security—come on. The old age security has been the same for the last 20 years, with no increases: \$500 a month. A person can't live on \$500 a month. They can't even pay their rent. I don't know; I don't know how people survive. I frankly do not know how they do it. They must be magicians

with their finances. And the government wonders why there are illegal cigarettes and the government wonders why there's a black market. Because people can't afford the things that are happening in our province. They want to be good citizens. They want to pay regular prices, but they can't because they don't have jobs, they don't have money and they don't have pension plans.

It's a rippling effect: no money, no economy. Yes, the upper middle class, the middle class and the well-to-do will survive, but what about the other 50% of Ontarians who are below that level? What do they do?

We were extremely frustrated in the committee. The parliamentary assistant mentioned that they looked at some of our comments and our amendments, and unfortunately 99.9 weren't accepted, and the one that was accepted was one they decided to withdraw because it was going to make them look bad. They gave us a half for that. That was very generous, considering I've sat on committees now for almost three years and I don't think we've had one—I repeat, one—amendment, from the NDP anyway, and I can't speak for the Conservatives, but I don't believe they have accepted one—good, constructive, well-thought-out, well-researched amendments that this government ignored totally, continues to ignore, and I've not got my hopes up that they're going to do anything but ignore, because if it isn't their idea, they don't use it. Pardon me—they might, eight months later. They'll take a good idea, twist it a little bit, and say it was theirs. I don't care, as long as it gets done, but it doesn't, because they end up twisting their own ideas into it until it's not the original idea.

Madame Speaker, you look like you want to stand up any second. You're wavering in your seat. I have a whole hour, if I want to go. Relax.

All I'm going to say is that people would love to go ahead, heads in the sand, and move ahead with what they think is a great big reform package for pensions—not. They did two things. They did a little administrative—no money. No money for the people in this bill. Don't kid yourselves out there in Ontario land. You're not going to get any additional money in the PBGF at this point, and I'm quite surprised if you'll get it later. Since everyone is so anxious not to discuss this, I think I'll wind this up at this point and, once again, I'll be happy to hear no responses.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments?

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: Thank you, Speaker. It does look like you're enjoying yourself this afternoon in a comfortable position.

I'm sure the member opposite, when he has the opportunity, will in part correct the record, because we know what his intention was. Let me say that I appreciated the speech by the member opposite. We did accept an amendment, albeit it was a good amendment. We shared a similar idea in that regard. We were happy to withdraw our amendment in favour of the member opposite's during that process.

I do want to comment more on just one thing. Mr. Miller from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek mentioned—

June, I think, was his reference point for this session with respect to a second piece of legislation, and I believe the critic from the official opposition, the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka, may have mentioned not seeing legislation until June. The minister's reference was this year; it wasn't this session, so if you don't see legislation before the House rises or if you don't see legislation by June 1, it could be because the minister had indicated legislation this year, not this particular session.

I appreciate the many comments from the member opposite. I was very interested, obviously, in his early comments. I appreciate, as he's had the opportunity, as have the members opposite, to expand upon and articulate more fully their view of an Ontario retirement plan. He was very specific today, much more so today with additional time, and began to lay out the parameters of that idea. Those are the kinds of things that we're all going to have to look at. CPP, workplace plans and retirement savings by individuals are all part of the things in this process that we're going to have to continue to explore.

1730

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Randy Hillier: I want to make a few comments because both the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek and the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka brought up in their comments how the Liberal government did not adopt any of the amendments that were advanced on this bill. Especially, I want to go back to the amendments that were offered up by the Conservative Party—to create a pension advisory committee, and another amendment that would allow for information and knowledge to be disseminated in a much more easy and appropriate fashion—because I know I have constituents who call me who are members of pensions. Really, pensions are a labyrinth; they're so complex and so convoluted. I hear all the time—I'm sure every other member does—that we need some mechanism whereby people can be knowledgeable about their pensions so that they don't find surprises when they hit age 65 or whatever.

Maybe one member of this Liberal government can stand up next time it's their turn and explain to me, explain to the people in this House, explain to the public why they would not accept these non-partisan amendments that would allow people to gain more knowledge and insight into their pension plans. Pensions transcend political parties, and it appears to me that the Liberal Party viewed this in a totally partisan way, that any amendments that were offered up by the opposition were just not acceptable, not good enough, and that they would rather have people in ignorance—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further comments?

Mr. Bill Mauro: I want to make a couple of comments. I'm pleased to respond to the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek. I was here for the beginning of his speech, and I do want to thank him for a couple of the comments that he made that I think those of

us on this side of the House will appreciate. That was, near the beginning of his speech, he made reference to two things that I think, as a Liberal government, we have been supportive of, and those are the bankruptcy legislation and a national plan when it comes to pension reform in Canada, not just in Ontario.

The bankruptcy piece, of course, is federal. It's an issue that comes up often, certainly in my riding. I have a lot of pensioners who find themselves in difficulty as well at this time, and I talk to them and explain to them how we need some help from the federal government on that issue to try to help them. But also on the national plan, many of these companies, as the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek knows, operate in more than one province, in more than one jurisdiction, and if we are truly going to be able to help them we need to try to find some national solution.

I think, at the end of the day, it is probably the best hoped-for solution. Whether or not that's what actually arrives, I take the member's comments to heart. I know that it might be a bit much for us to expect that the current federal government will go as far as any of us would like them to, but nevertheless, it is appropriate that we hope and would see a really national solution come at that level.

I would add, though, that I do remember quite clearly—and it may have been even before the member came in 2007, but this issue has been sort of beginning to percolate up to the surface for quite some time now. I do remember very clearly the Premier, in this Legislature some time ago—two, three years ago, perhaps, as far back as that—very publicly articulating at that time, before it became as acute as it is today, that we needed some help from the federal government on this issue. I must say that at that time it was sort of pooh-poohed as us dismissing our responsibilities in this regard, and now here today we see others very much supporting what he was trying to accomplish two or three years ago.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It is my pleasure to add my comments to the members' comments on Bill 236 in this third reading debate.

Anybody you talk to in the street—and we went through the Nortel piece and the threat of General Motors, if they weren't going to survive, the stress that it would leave in our communities. We talked about it never happening to Nortel. It would never happen to General Motors. It happened, or, in the case of General Motors, it happened to a certain extent.

This government and other governments in the past tend not to be proactive sometimes when things are working well, but as the economy turned, of course, it impacted industry—it impacted those industries that supported pensions, and we do have an issue. There's no question about it. Nobody would deny it.

I think what we did as a government—we made it very, very clear. It is a very complex issue and we want to try to get it as right as we can. Is it ever going to be right right? I'm not sure what "right right" is.

We're doing this in two phases. This is the first phase. No, it doesn't fix all the problems, but it's a start. At the same time, I think that now we have an understanding, thanks to the federal government coming to the table and saying, "Yes, this is an issue we have to look at nationally because we certainly don't want to fracture things." I know people who worked in one province and retired in another province. So we want something collectively.

This is a start. I'm confident that it's going to be a little bit of a long process, but I think we're going to get it right at the end of the day.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

The member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Paul Miller: I appreciate the comments of my colleagues in the House. The parliamentary assistant was looking for an acknowledgment that they kind of moved on half of an amendment, and I'd be more than happy to agree with him that they did withdraw something they had on the table and ours was much better, and they did accept that. I'll give him that. That was one out of about—in two and a half years, I guess one out of about 200—that's not bad.

But other than that, I'd also like to address the member from the north—I forgot his riding. I'm trying to look here. It's Thunder Bay-Atikokan. He had some good points. Yes, it's true; it is also a national situation, but what he didn't mention was the NDP plan for Ontario, which has received great, great accolades throughout the province. People would like us to move in that direction, but it seems to have fallen off the rails a bit with the government's plans. They are shifting some of the blame on the feds, but they have to step up and take their responsibility because they administer and govern about 90% of the pension plans in Ontario that they have jurisdiction over. So they can be a big player in this and certainly could move in a direction that would be beneficial to the people of the province.

I would hope that the mention of the member saying that they're moving a little bit at a time—I agree; a little bit at a time. We would have liked to have seen a lot more, but hopefully—I'll correct myself. I guess it's in the fall session that they said they're going to bring something better, and I'm hoping it's going to be much, much better.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Randy Hillier: I just noticed that after my last comments when I asked a member of the Liberal Party to explain why the amendments were not accepted, amendments about allowing people to have more information, more participation in their pensions, two members of the Liberal Party stood up and gave comments, but neither one of them gave any answers to that question. So, silence once again is the order of the day.

I'd also like to say that I come from a little bit of a different background. As an electrician, as a tradesman—

we always had the view that a good job was a complete job. A good job was a job that you didn't have to come back to ever again. It was finished. That's what we strived for. That's what was expected.

1740

Now I'm here and I see this Liberal government, and it doesn't matter. Every bill that they advance is never a complete bill. Their bills are always half measures, halfway there and always half being brought back. We saw that with Bill 231, the elections act. There are gaping holes in that one on third party election financing that we debated yesterday, I believe. We see it once again with Bill 236, the pension bill: a lot of tinkering, a lot of housekeeping—important things, but very important for a very small group of people. But then the large group of people who are looking for this government to fix and address some of the significant problems in pensions—well, that's going to come some other time. It's too much for this Liberal government to take on in one bill.

Of course, we heard earlier that definitely, this next pension bill will come in this session. Now we hear that it's going to be this year. I don't know when we'll ever see that, but I think it's important that we look at the trend that has been established by the Liberal Party, and that is a trend of half measures and half work: nothing ever complete, nothing ever finalized, just a continuation of more debate without getting the job done.

Let me explain a little bit here, because I have a number of constituents who were employees of Nortel. I'm sure I'm not the only one; I'm sure there are many members in this House who have Nortel pensioners. They spent a lot of time looking at addressing the problem that happened with their pensions. What has the Liberal government done to fix this gaping hole in the pensions that happens when a firm is insolvent and when their pension funds have not been funded properly? Well, we do nothing; nothing has been done—nothing. The only thing that was done by this Liberal government was the thing that they always find the easiest thing to do whenever a problem appears in front of them.

There was a problem with the Nortel pension. Instead of bringing in legislation to address that, instead of bringing in oversight a long time ago to ensure that the fund was properly funded—those all would have taken a little bit of effort. Instead, what do we see? The government took the easy route and they stroked another \$500-million cheque into the pension guarantee fund. That's what this Liberal government always, apparently, seems to find the solution is: "Let's take more money out of taxpayers' pockets and let's spend it." That is the way they see to fix a problem: Spend money.

It's interesting, because here we are talking about pensions. In pensions, we know this is for retirement savings. This is for savings so that we have something for a rainy day, so that individuals can have a quality of life, a standard of life past the time of their gainful employment. They understand they're savings. The Liberal government understands spending. People understand savings; Liberal governments understand spending. As these people are trying to save money to have a quality of

life after employment, what do we see happen? Not only the \$500 million in the budget that is being spent instead of providing oversight, we also see things like a new HST tax—a new HST tax that is going to apply on management fees on registered retirement funds and on mutual funds. So here, once again, the Liberal government talks about people saving money, and here they are taking more money away from people so that they will have less. More taxes; more spending; new taxes; taxes on new products and services. They have a spending problem, and that problem trickles right down into everybody's pockets, and we see this. As people's savings are getting scarcer and scarcer, this government keeps digging deeper and deeper into those people's pockets.

They could have fixed the amendments to provide and to allow for people to be more knowledgeable about their pensions. They refused, absolutely refused. These were sensible, reasonable, practical amendments and they refused. I can't understand how members of the government can allow themselves to be whipped into such a condition that they will not accept amendments that benefit their constituents, that provide value to their constituents. They chose not to.

So we see a lot of tinkering with this bill, but very little substance. We see more half-measures and more incompleteness. I'll tell you, anybody who contracted a firm that operated in this fashion would have them in court and would be suing them for an incomplete contract. We expect people to complete their jobs.

I've not heard any rationale as to why we have not addressed this problem with Nortel and others. We know that it's been going on for some time. This didn't just happen yesterday or the day before; it happened long before even this bill was introduced. We knew of the problems at Nortel. But why have we brought out a bill of tinkering and let the bill of substance languish somewhere in Liberal la-la land? Where is it? What's happening? What's preventing you from bringing out a bill that will actually protect pensioners? Again, \$500 million more in this budget to mitigate the failure of this Liberal government to ensure that funding is in those pension funds.

Maybe I'll give you an example on these amendments that we advanced. I have a constituent in my riding whose name is Roger Closs. He has been in contact with me for a period of time. His pension is with OPSEU. He had previously divorced before he retired—the survivor's benefit is where I'm going at with this one. He didn't find out until after he retired that the survivor's portion of his pension must go to his ex-wife, even though both he and his ex-wife had agreed that they would not have a claim on each other's properties. It was, I guess I'll say, a fair settlement of separation and they both agreed that there would be no claim against each other. He finds out afterwards that his survivor's pension must go to his ex-wife, not a new partner or anybody else. He can't change this. I wasn't aware of that part of the pension.

That's what I'm talking about: this labyrinth of details in pensions. Why, when the opportunity arose for this

government to allow people to be better informed, to be more knowledgeable, so that they don't find out years later some minutia, some detail that was never explained or exposed in their pensions, didn't we give them that opportunity to be knowledgeable?

1750

It would certainly help not just me, it wouldn't just help Roger Closs; it would help all of us if our constituents, if the residents of this province had a better understanding of all the contractual details that are within a pension plan. I'm sure we can all agree on that. It would benefit all of us. I know it would certainly alleviate and lessen the strain that people find when they get into these stressful situations of finding out that what they thought was is, not; something different is happening.

Again, going back to this tinkering—we're dealing with, essentially, defined benefit plans, but what of all the 65% to 70% of the people of this province who have no defined contribution or defined benefit plan? What have we done for them? What have we done for those people in this pension reform? The two things that we know that this Liberal government has done is they've added to their tax burden with the HST and they've added to their tax burden with the \$500-million top-up to the pension guarantee fund. We've added more costs onto those people, but what have we done to assist or help them with their pensions, with their retirement days, so that they can have a quality of life and a standard of living beyond their gainfully employed days? What has the Liberal government done for them? It's called a goose egg. That's what 70% of this province got from the Liberal government: zilch, zero, except for these added expenses—added expenses, but no benefits, not even the acceptance or allowance that they can be fully engaged and participate and understand their pensions. They disallowed those sensible amendments.

Hopefully, the PA, the parliamentary assistant, or someone, anybody on the Liberal side—anybody: I ask you to stand up and tell me, tell Roger Closs, tell the people of this province why party politics were so important that you would not allow them to gain insight and knowledge into their pensions, that you wouldn't allow those amendments. I want to see somebody on the other side of this House have the courage and have the conviction to stand up and tell the people of this province why you wouldn't accept it. That is the challenge that I have put out for the members of this Liberal government. Stand up. There are some people watching this; there will be some people watching it. Do yourself a favour and really come good for the people of this province. Show them what you're made of and show them that there is value in having elected people stand up for their interests. That's really what we want to see.

I want you to—actually, go back. Remember what I started off with here?

A good tradesman completes the job. He doesn't work in half measures or half something else, I could say, but that might be unparliamentary.

Interjection: We know what you mean, though.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I'm sure the members opposite understand what I mean with that, and I'm sure there are many people out in the public who understand.

But let's have a complete job for once from this Liberal government, a complete job and not have that qualified support, because there are some good things in here. As the member from Simcoe-Grey explained, there are some good elements in here that are going to be a benefit and a help to a very small portion of the residents of this province. So we have to support that because it's the right thing to do. It will address an inadvertent wrongdoing that happened previously with people like the paramedics and people who have transferred employers but really haven't changed jobs. So we will be supporting on that.

But I really do want to see some day this Liberal government reverse the trend they are on and do a good, complete job, so that our support will not be qualified. Our amendments will be accepted and the support will be not qualified.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd just like to address the member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington. Once again, the member's creative integral content really is amazing. He goes after his friends across the floor with zest and asks a lot of whys, and he doesn't get too many answers, I see.

This is a common theme that I'm seeing that's been created here today, the frustration of the opposition and the third party with the amendments that are constantly shot down in committees. Like I said—I'll reiterate—when I first got here, the two weeks in Parliament, the Premier stood up and said, "Welcome, members. We're all here to work for the betterment of Ontario, work for the people of Ontario." I was quite impressed with his speech but, as time progressed, it was partisan politics, not listening to other amendments, not even dealing with them. Sometimes I've even been in committee where they don't even read them, don't even know what I'm talking about, and others just don't pay attention. So it's very frustrating for the third party and the opposition to constantly go up against a big wall with no window.

I share the member's frustration. I would just once like to see some constructive acceptance of some of the good amendments that the third party and the opposition bring forward to be addressed and utilized rather than put on the back burner and maybe parts of them used later, but that's always down the road. Instead of dealing with the problem now, it's always down the road: "We may use some of your ideas that we've borrowed"—I like to use the word "borrowed"—"from you." They borrow them from us and they all of a sudden show up.

I guess that's the way this game's played here. I really don't like the game—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further comments?

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: To the member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington—I'll refer to it as 613. That'll be helpful in that regard.

I really appreciate his comments and those from the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek. They are of a like mind. They're both upset that the government doesn't accept all of their amendments. I would suggest that at some point someone who has a longer history in this place than that member or even myself, someone with a long history might some day get up and explain to them how the process works in the context of amendments when governments of all stripes bring motions before committee, and how the government has to be convinced that not only is it just a good amendment, but it really has to be so substantive it's going to really actually improve the outcome of the legislation. I've not seen that yet, and certainly not from the members opposite in their speeches.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. It being close to 6 of the clock—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): You want to finish? Okay. Questions and comments?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Yes. The member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

1800

Mr. Bill Murdoch: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I was hoping you weren't going to cut us off, because there's only a few minutes left.

I understand this is Bill 236, An Act to amend the Pension Benefits Act. We've heard from all these members that you didn't amend anything, that you wouldn't accept the amendments from the opposition. Now, what's going on over there, again? Do we have to put up with this? The Liberals, again, don't want to take amendments.

This is unfortunate, and I see our good friends from the NDP are even upset with this. You guys, I don't know what you're doing up there. Can't you remember back to when we had the bedwetters' accord, when the NDP and the Liberals were together and used to get everything together? That was back in 1989, I think, you were together. They had a big accord here; it was called the bedwetters' accord, I believe.

Interjection: It was 1987.

Mr. Bill Murdoch: It was 1987. That's when it was; that's right. You would have thought that they would have at least accepted an amendment from the NDP. But not again.

I've been sitting here listening to this conversation, and it bothers people that you won't accept amendments from us. You wonder why nobody gets along with you. They won't accept any amendments. You'd think somebody would. It's just a bit unbelievable.

The only believable thing we can do in this House is hope that the Montreal Canadiens win tomorrow night. I just want to hold this up. We've got a good Montreal sweater here; Jean-Marc Lalonde brought it in. We can all hope that a good team like the Montreal Canadiens will win and go on to win the Stanley Cup, because they deserve it—

Mr. Howard Hampton: The Leafs aren't going to do it.

Mr. Bill Murdoch: The Leafs are maybe going to go on—they'll probably go on to another city somewhere or something like that. Anyway, we all hope that Montreal wins the Stanley Cup.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from Essex.

Mr. Bruce Crozier: Since we're going to do these two-minuters, let me give you a quick lesson. You've asked about amendments. I came here in 1993 under an NDP government. I sat on committee, and in opposition we gave what we thought were some very good amendments. They didn't get accepted. Then along came the Mike Harris government. What happened there was that a bill would have second reading, go to committee, and there would be no public hearings and no opposition amendments. I can remember one bill—one bill—that got amended. So that's the story.

Now you're here complaining that there are no amendments? Well, sometimes, I guess we have to believe the same as the NDP and the Tories did: I guess they just weren't good amendments.

Fergie Jenkins told me one time that he was told, "It ain't going to be an easy run," and I guess sometimes it isn't.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I want to thank the members from Grey-Bruce, Pickering, Essex and Hamilton East for their comments.

Let's keep in mind here that this is a Legislative Assembly, and we are to deal with facts, not just the revisionist history, as we've heard from some members.

We understand that the Liberal Party is not predisposed to accepting amendments. We know that. But when a good, solid, reasonable amendment comes forward that will be beneficial to society, they do have an obligation to advance that.

They do have an obligation to themselves and to their constituents. They have a higher allegiance to our residents and our citizens than they should have to their party. That is really key here: allegiance to the people and to do good for them, not just what's good for the Liberal Party.

That's what we see over on this side: Our allegiance is first and foremost to our constituents, that we represent their concerns, that we will bring forward their concerns, and that we won't do it in half measures or that other half thing that we so often see from the Liberal Party.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): It being after 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1805.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Aggelonitis, Hon. / L'hon. Sophia (LIB)	Hamilton Mountain	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington-Halton Hills	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Arthurs, Wayne (LIB)	Pickering-Scarborough East / Pickering-Scarborough-Est	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia-Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough-Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand-Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	Attorney General / Procureur général
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough-Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Broten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse
		Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma-Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Caplan, David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Carroll, M. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham-Unionville	Minister of Tourism and Culture / Ministre du Tourisme et de la Culture
Chiarelli, Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West-Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean	
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds-Grenville	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton-Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Crozier, Bruce (LIB)	Essex	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
		Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga-Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax-Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale-High Park	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (LIB)	Prince Edward-Hastings	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Energy and Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Énergie et de l'Infrastructure
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor-Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement
		Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby—Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry / Ministre du Développement du Nord, des Mines et des Forêts
Hampton, Howard (NDP)	Kenora—Rainy River	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Hoy, Pat (LIB)	Chatham—Kent—Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West—Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest—Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges—Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton—Springdale	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Johnson, Rick (LIB)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin—Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket—Aurora	
Kormos, Peter (NDP)	Welland	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Kular, Kuldip (LIB)	Bramalea—Gore—Malton	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Levac, Dave (LIB)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean—Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga—Brampton South / Mississauga—Brampton-Sud	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity—Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McMeekin, Ted (LIB)	Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough— Westdale	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa—Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa—Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Hon. / L'hon. Carol (LIB)	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Munro, Julia (PC)	York-Simcoe	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	
Murray, Glen R (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Oraziotti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB)	Kitchener-Conestoga	
Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (LIB)	Elgin-Middlesex-London	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (LIB)	Scarborough-Agincourt	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches-East York	
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Economic Development and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London-Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland-Quinte West	
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Nipissing	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton-Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto-Danforth	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga-Erindale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	
Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Perth-Wellington	Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener-Waterloo	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Yakubski, John (PC)	Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Garfield Dunlop
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Robert Bailey
Robert Bailey, Gilles Bisson
Jim Brownell, Kim Craiton
Bob Delaney, Garfield Dunlop
Amrit Mangat, Phil McNeely
John O'Toole
Clerks / Greffiers: William Short (pro tem.), Sylwia Przedzdiecki

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Pat Hoy
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laura Albanese
Laura Albanese, Wayne Arthurs
Toby Barrett, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Pat Hoy, Norm Miller
Glen R Murray, Charles Sousa
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: David Orazietti
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Helena Jaczek
Bob Chiarelli, Steve Clark
Helena Jaczek, Kuldip Kular
Dave Levac, Rosario Marchese
Bill Mauro, David Orazietti
Joyce Savoline
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Laura Albanese, Michael A. Brown
Donna H. Cansfield, M. Aileen Carroll
Howard Hampton, Ernie Hardeman
Lisa MacLeod, Leeanna Pendergast
Jim Wilson
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Leeanna Pendergast
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Ted Chudleigh
Mike Colle, Christine Elliott
Peter Kormos, Reza Moridi
Leeanna Pendergast, Lou Rinaldi
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Bas Balkissoon
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Yasir Naqvi
Bas Balkissoon, Bob Delaney
Joe Dickson, Sylvia Jones
Amrit Mangat, Norm Miller
Yasir Naqvi, Michael Prue
Mario Sergio
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Norman W. Sterling
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Peter Shurman
M. Aileen Carroll, France Gélinas
Jerry J. Ouellette, David Ramsay
Liz Sandals, Peter Shurman
Norman W. Sterling, Maria Van Bommel
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Paul Miller
David Caplan, Kim Craiton
Jeff Leal, Gerry Martiniuk
Paul Miller, Bill Murdoch
Michael Prue, Lou Rinaldi
Tony Ruprecht
Clerks / Greffiers: Trevor Day (pro tem.), Sylwia Przedzdiecki

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vic Dhillon
Vic Dhillon, Cheri DiNovo
Rick Johnson, Sylvia Jones
Jean-Marc Lalonde, Ted McMeekin
Shafiq Qaadri, Khalil Ramal
Elizabeth Witmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions / Comité
spécial de la santé mentale et des dépendances**

Chair / Président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott
Bas Balkissoon, Christine Elliott
Kevin Daniel Flynn, France Gélinas
Helena Jaczek, Sylvia Jones
Jeff Leal, Liz Sandals
Maria Van Bommel
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

DEFERRED VOTES / VOTES DIFFÉRÉS

Full Day Early Learning Statute Law Amendment Act, 2010, Bill 242, Mrs. Dombrowsky / Loi de 2010 modifiant des lois en ce qui concerne l'apprentissage des jeunes enfants à temps plein, projet de loi 242, Mme Dombrowsky	
Third reading agreed to	991
Conduct of House proceedings	
Mr. Bill Murdoch	991
The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters).....	991

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

Junior hockey	
Mr. Ted Chudleigh	991
Day of mourning	
Mr. Paul Miller.....	992
Garrett Holmes	
Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn	992
Junior hockey	
Mr. Steve Clark	992
Elena Mamychева	
Mrs. Laura Albanese	992
General Motors of Canada	
Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette.....	993
Minor hockey	
Mr. Bill Mauro	993
Renewable energy	
Mr. Jim Brownell	993
Ottawa Senators	
Mr. Yasir Naqvi	994

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES / RAPPORTS DES COMITÉS

Standing Committee on Government Agencies	
The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters).....	994
Report deemed adopted.....	994

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS / DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI

Post-secondary Education Statute Law Amendment Act, 2010, Bill 43, Mr. Milloy / Loi de 2010 modifiant des lois en ce qui concerne l'enseignement postsecondaire, projet de loi 43, M. Milloy	
First reading agreed to	994

MOTIONS

Appointment of Environmental Commissioner	
Hon. Monique M. Smith	994
Motion agreed to	994

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES / DÉCLARATIONS MINISTÉRIELLES ET RÉPONSES

Post-secondary education / Éducation postsecondaire	
Hon. John Milloy	994
Mr. Jim Wilson.....	995
Mr. Rosario Marchese	996

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Ontario pharmacists	
Mr. Jim Wilson.....	997
Ontario pharmacists	
Mr. Bill Murdoch	997
Aboriginal programs and services	
Mr. Shafiq Qaadri.....	997
Taxation	
Mr. Norm Miller.....	998
Highway 17/174	
Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde	998
Ontario pharmacists	
Mr. Steve Clark	998
Taxation	
Mr. Norm Miller.....	998
Elmvale District High School	
Mr. Jim Wilson.....	999
Ontario pharmacists	
Mr. Jeff Leal.....	999
Ontario pharmacists	
Mr. Steve Clark	999
Ontario pharmacists	
Mr. Lou Rinaldi.....	999
Taxation	
Mrs. Julia Munro	1000
Ontario pharmacists	
Mr. Steve Clark	1000

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Pension Benefits Amendment Act, 2010, Bill 236, Mr. Duncan / Loi de 2010 modifiant la Loi sur les régimes de retraite, projet de loi 236, M. Duncan	
Hon. Monique M. Smith	1000
Mr. Wayne Arthurs	1000

Mr. Jim Wilson	1003
Mr. Paul Miller	1003
Mr. Mike Colle	1003
Mr. Peter Shurman.....	1004
Mr. Wayne Arthurs.....	1004
Mr. Norm Miller	1004
Mr. Paul Miller	1009
Mr. Wayne Arthurs.....	1009
Mr. Peter Shurman.....	1009
Mr. Jeff Leal	1010
Mr. Norm Miller	1010
Mr. Paul Miller	1010
Mr. Wayne Arthurs.....	1014
Mr. Randy Hillier	1015
Mr. Bill Mauro.....	1015
Mr. Lou Rinaldi	1015
Mr. Paul Miller	1016
Mr. Randy Hillier	1016
Mr. Paul Miller	1018
Mr. Wayne Arthurs.....	1018
Mr. Bill Murdoch.....	1018
Mr. Bruce Crozier.....	1019
Mr. Randy Hillier	1019
Third reading debate deemed adjourned.....	1019

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Tuesday 27 April 2010 / Mardi 27 avril 2010

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Election Statute Law Amendment Act, 2010, Bill 231, Mr. Bentley / Loi de 2010 modifiant des lois en ce qui concerne les élections, projet de loi 231, M. Bentley

Hon. Monique M. Smith	971
Mr. David Zimmer	971
Mr. Norm Miller	973
Mr. Peter Kormos	973
Mr. Pat Hoy	973
Mr. John O'Toole	974
Mr. David Zimmer	974
Mr. Ted Chudleigh	974
Mr. Michael Prue	978
Mr. David Zimmer	979
Mr. Randy Hillier	979
Ms. Cheri DiNovo	979
Mr. Ted Chudleigh	980
Third reading debate deemed adjourned	980

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mr. Wayne Arthurs	980
Mr. Bruce Crozier	980
Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn	980
Mr. Paul Miller	980
Hon. Deborah Matthews	980
Mr. David Zimmer	980
The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters)	980

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Renewable energy

Mr. Tim Hudak	980
Hon. Brad Duguid	980

Renewable energy

Mr. Tim Hudak	981
Hon. Brad Duguid	981

Nurses

Ms. Andrea Horwath	982
Hon. Deborah Matthews	982

Health care funding

Ms. Andrea Horwath	983
Hon. Deborah Matthews	983

Visitors

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters)	984
---------------------------------------	-----

Renewable energy

Mr. Bill Murdoch	984
Hon. Brad Duguid	984

Public transit

Ms. Cheri DiNovo	984
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	985

Child poverty

Mrs. Laura Albanese	985
Hon. Laurel C. Broten	985

Taxation

Mr. John Yakabuski	985
Hon. John Wilkinson	986

Health promotion

Mme France Gélinas	986
Hon. Margaret R. Best	986

Eastern Ontario development

Mr. Jim Brownell	987
Hon. Sandra Pupatello	987

Prescription drugs

Mrs. Christine Elliott	987
Hon. Deborah Matthews	987

Child poverty

Ms. Andrea Horwath	988
Hon. Madeleine Meilleur	988
Mr. Paul Miller	988
Hon. Laurel C. Broten	988

Agri-food industry

Mr. Khalil Ramal	989
Hon. Carol Mitchell	989

Darlington nuclear generating station

Mr. John O'Toole	989
Hon. Brad Duguid	989

Property taxation

Mr. Peter Tabuns	990
Hon. Dwight Duncan	990

Visitors

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters)	990
---------------------------------------	-----

Continued on inside back cover

C420N
x1
-023



No. 23

N° 23

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly of Ontario

Second Session, 39th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 39^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Wednesday 28 April 2010

Mercredi 28 avril 2010



Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

<http://www.ontla.on.ca/>

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7410 or 325-3708.

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7410 ou le 325-3708.

Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services
Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



Service du Journal des débats et d'interprétation
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400; télécopieur, 416-325-7430
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 28 April 2010

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 28 avril 2010

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the Buddhist prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PENSION BENEFITS AMENDMENT ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES RÉGIMES DE RETRAITE

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 27, 2010, on the motion for third reading of Bill 236, An Act to amend the Pension Benefits Act / Projet de loi 236, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les régimes de retraite.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Kormos: It's a pleasure to speak to this bill this morning. I'm pleased to be joined by my colleague and friend from across the way, who, I'm also pleased to point out, is adopting the sartorial custom of smaller-town Ontario. As he's attired today, he would be welcome in places like Welland, Thorold, Port Colborne and Wainfleet. Indeed—dare I say it?—he'd be applauded as somebody who understands what the real values should be, and that's not whether or not one wears an expensive cravat, but whether or not one has something valuable to say. Mr. Zimmer does, on so many occasions. Unfortunately, he's pocketing a pen that is of, perhaps, dubious quality. Give the gold one back.

Look, this is serious stuff. The government is purporting to engage in pension reform. As I say when I mention the communities that I represent, the issue out there is really quite simple. As the celebrity chef on TV says, "It ain't rocket science." We've got a growing population of people in this province and across this country who are fearful of reaching their senior years, not because of the effects of old age or aging, and not because they know that they're closer to their end than they are to their beginning. As I've had occasion to comment so many times, when I was a kid growing up in the 1950s, I recall clearly that people used to worry about not living long enough. Now, as I meet people, whether it's at the constituency office or, probably even more frequently, in the church halls or the Legion hall over on Morningstar, at the Welland market or the Port Colborne market or from time to time up at the St. Catharines market, which is a

fine farmers' market in itself—Thorold has a small one and Pelham has a small one—I talk to seniors who are fearful of not being able to afford to live in their senior years, who are literally losing houses, losing homes, losing income, and they are sad and find it tragic that they're unable to assist their grandkids—or some, now, great-grandkids—who are pursuing post-secondary education, or perhaps beginning young families.

There's a crisis, and the crisis is one of pensions for people in their retirement years. Now, the government, some time ago, purported to address that crisis by saying, "Well, we'll simply extend the retirement age. No more of this nonsense of people retiring at 65. What nonsense?"—as if 65 were the prevailing number. We were defrauded by the advertising of Freedom 55.

Mr. Mike Colle: Freedom 85 is more like it.

Mr. Peter Kormos: That's right, as the interjection appropriately puts it: Freedom 85, on a good day. As a matter of fact, that reminds me that Peter Worthington, just a couple of weeks ago—I presume he had been down in Florida during the winter months, and did a comment on the phenomenon of seniors working, the Walmart phenomenon. Again, look, I have mixed feelings about that. I know the seniors down in Welland who work at Walmart. Some take great delight in being out there and socializing and interacting with people, and the little bit of income doesn't hurt. Others, quite frankly, are obliged to work and feel this gratitude toward Walmart, which has so many other regrettable impacts on our communities and on our small-town retail sectors. They feel gratitude toward Walmart for giving them the opportunity to work, because they need the money.

0910

The anecdote that Worthington told—I'm sure it's not germane at all to this particular issue—was about the senior who was a Walmart employee into his 80s who was well liked by the customers and well liked by the other staff and was very good at his job but was perpetually late. The store manager simply couldn't take it anymore, and this 80-plus senior citizen was called into the office after being late once again. The manager said, "Look, we like your work, your co-workers like you, the customers like you, but you're always late." The fellow said, "Yes, it's been a problem all my working life." The manager said, "What did your co-workers say to you before you retired when you showed up late at work?" He replied, "They usually said, 'Good morning, General. Can I get you a coffee?'" I don't know whether that story is apocryphal or not—it's amusing—but I think it does speak to the phenomenon of seniors being compelled to work.

Most of the seniors I talk to—as a matter of fact, I was over at the Legion hall on Morningstar Avenue down in Welland on Sunday, and who did I run into but Mike Bosnich. Mike told me he's 92 years old now. He's a veteran and also a leader in the progressive trade union community down in Welland. He was with the United Electrical Workers, which was the dominant union in Welland before they merged with the CAW. I remember him as a kid. He was one of my mentors; he and John Trufac and Bruce Smith from the UE hall. He decried the fact that he's 92 years old. But he was the sort of senior who, upon his retirement, didn't want to have to go and work. He wanted to be occupied, he wanted to be able to do things, but he would have much sooner, and in fact did, volunteer and work with people who needed driving back and forth for various medical treatments and so on.

We're down to, what, 30% of the workforce with pensions? Of those, only a fraction are defined benefit pensions, and the number with defined benefit pensions is decreasing regularly. More and more workers, when they do have unions, are being forced into signing contracts that create two tiers. One was just recently signed here in the province of Ontario—a rather large workforce—where new hires are forced into a defined contribution plan and only the senior workers are eligible for the defined benefit plan.

I suppose you do have to read the morning papers, the financial papers—we thought we were just recovering. You see, if you have a defined contribution pension plan, you're a victim of the markets. There may be a few people left with faith in the markets—the Randites, who believe that the markets, in and of themselves, will order things in a way that's to the benefit of the greatest number of people—but how many more lessons do we need?

Defined contribution plans are effectively RRSPs. The banks make a great deal of money on them, and the various people who do financial advice make a great deal of money on them with their hidden trailer fees. What are trailer fees? Trailer fees are kickbacks. For the life of me, this government takes on small-town pharmacists about what the government implies are kickbacks from the pharmaceutical industry, but where is this government when it comes to protecting people and providing disclosure when it comes to kickbacks from the mutual fund industry to financial services advisers and so on?

The kickback is a percentage that they get. What that does, of course, is create a motivation. It takes the financial adviser out of the position of being entirely neutral and devoted solely to his or her client, to the point where they have a serious conflict, a real conflict of interest, because it's in their interest to sell the funds that have the largest trailer fees, even though those funds may not be the most stable funds. Why do funds have large trailer fees? Because they want to give salespeople—financial advisers—an incentive to sell them and promote them. As a matter of fact, what you'll find is that the funds with the largest trailer fees are almost inevitably the funds with the largest management fees. How else do they

afford those trailer fees, right? Yet the funds with the largest management fees are rarely the stablest funds or the funds with the best returns. So that's what people are forced into with defined contribution plans.

Again, we thought we were recovering from a crisis. People whose investments, however modest or large—let's face it, if you have millions of dollars invested and you lose 10%, you're still going to be okay. If you lose 20% or 30%, you're still going to survive; you ain't going to be at the food bank. But if your life savings, and it does for so many hard-working people, consists of \$80,000 or \$100,000—that's a lot of money where I come from. To lose 20% or 30% of that is devastating. It's the difference between some modest decency during retirement and the indecency of lining up at food banks and soup kitchens and having to wait in a line for housing that has subsidized rent.

So that's the crisis. There was a Premier back in the early 1990s, another Liberal, who designed—or adopted; he didn't design it—the phrase, “too big to fail.” At the time, he was probably right; nobody disagreed with him. But we've learned in a very dramatic way that that Liberal Premier's adoption of “too big to fail” was a serious error, because we learned—

Mrs. Liz Sandals: The Liberal Premier was Bob Rae.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Ah, my colleague Ms. Sandals from Guelph astutely points out that that Liberal Premier was in fact Bob Rae, who could be her next federal leader. I don't know whether she's a fan of his or not. I don't know whether she intends to wear his button at the next federal leadership convention.

So I say this: You had a Liberal Premier who, back in the early 1990s, adopted the “too big to fail” model and said, “We can forgive these companies their top-up obligations, because their pension plans will surely be around five and 10 years from now.” Now, one of the problems was that it was never designed to be a permanent measure, but nobody got around to rescinding the exemption that these too-big-to-fail companies had; nobody—not to the present. But by now it's too late, because those big companies in fact did fail, and of course the taxpayer then invested huge amounts of money.

I think most Ontarians support that type of investment, but I've got to tell you, my Atlas Steel workers in Welland—and I probably know 98% of them personally—their too-big-to-fail company failed: specialty steel, stainless steel; it was the only manufacturer of its type in the country. Governments of the day—and by now we're into 1995-plus—had no interest in helping Atlas Steel survive. Some 600 or 700 employees lost their jobs. But the biggest tragedy was that the pension plan collapsed, not just for potential pensioners but for the de facto pensioners. The de facto pensioners saw their pensions slashed in half, and they weren't particularly big pensions to begin with, because you see, one of the problems with pensions is that even defined benefit pensions—and there are fewer and fewer of them, and the ones that are left are being wrapped up relatively rapidly—unless they're the very, very good ones—and they're rare, the very good ones—

they fail to keep pace with the cost of living. So a pension income erodes naturally, never mind when it's slashed by 50%.

The real absence of an amendment to the pension benefits guarantee fund legislation in this bill is of concern. New Democrats have been arguing for a good chunk of time—I've had bills before the House on behalf of the NDP, and other New Democrat members have—for increasing the pension benefits guarantee fund coverage to \$2,500 a month. A rather modest proposal, ain't it? That \$2,500 a month doesn't buy a whole lot anymore: \$2,500 a month probably doesn't allow you to stay in your home, especially when you see property taxes and electricity rates going through the roof, natural gas rates going through the roof, and then when you're confronted, come July 1—Happy Canada Day—with Mr. McGuinty's HST, beating up once again on the lowest-income people, beating up once again on seniors, beating up once again on people.

See, in Toronto people live in apartments for any number of reasons. When you get to smaller-town Ontario, like Welland and Thorold and Port Colborne and Wainfleet and south St. Catharines, housing prices are relatively modest, compared to Toronto or Ottawa or London. People live in apartments by choice, but more often than not people live in apartments because they can't afford to buy a house. When you can't afford to buy a house in Welland, you're struggling. So when the landlord gets confronted with new costs like HST etc., and the government might say that the cap on the annual rental increases is going to be maintained, what will a landlord do? He'll simply cut back in other areas of service, won't he? He's got to make up the difference somewhere.

0920

Even the most benign landlord—and again, down in smaller-town Ontario, where landlords are known in the community, we don't have the big high-rises and towers. We've got local people who—more often than not it's a woman whose husband has passed away. She's a widow; she's renting the top floor of her house, which has been converted into an apartment. That's what most landlords are down where I come from. Oh, we've got a few of the developer landlords, but even they are probably far more careful about how they treat their tenants than some of the big corporate landlords in Toronto, because they're known in the community. They belong to the Club Richelieu or they belong to the Kiwanis or the Kinsmen. They shop at Pupo's, just like everybody else does, or at Sobeys, so they can't get away with this stuff. And they have no intention, no desire to.

Of course, there are some bad landlords, and we deal with them as best we can. But even the most benign and benevolent landlord is going to have to make up that increased cost somewhere, somehow. And mark my words—no, don't mark my words; just pay attention after July 1—it will come from tenants. There's nobody else for it to come from, is there? Whether it means cutting lawns half as often, whether it means increasing the rates on the laundromat downstairs—what about that? That's

not controlled by rental increases, is it? Again, it ain't rocket science to figure out the places and spaces where landlords are going to have to make up the difference. So the tenants will pay. Mark my words: The tenants will pay; the tenants will pay; the tenants will pay. And in most of smaller-town Ontario, those tenants tend to be lower-income people. People live in apartments for other reasons as well, but they tend to be lower-income people.

The absence of any reasonable topping up of the pension benefits guarantee fund limit is an atrocious omission. The failure to condemn defined contribution plans but rather to implicitly endorse them and encourage them by this government is another huge failure. The fact that work has changed dramatically—because this government, of course, has destroyed, what, 250,000 or 300,000 value-added manufacturing jobs, industrial jobs, good-paying jobs, wealth creation jobs? See, casino jobs don't create wealth; they simply stir it around. It's like the butter churn: Centrifugal force takes the money to the outside, and other people pocket it, including the government. The poor sucker who blows his paycheque in there pays. So casinos don't create wealth. And even at that, I have to tell you, down where I come from in Niagara, the casino jobs are disappearing. That speaks volumes. Recovery? Sure, there's a recovery. There's a recovery for the people who are playing the market; there's a recovery for Bay Street. There's not a recovery for Main Street, because it is, as so many have noted, so apparently a jobless recovery.

The absence of this government to address its role in government-sponsored public pension plans is another serious and atrocious omission from this legislation. The reality is that increasingly people are relying upon CPP, if they're entitled to it. A whole lot of elderly women aren't entitled to it, because they worked at home, raising kids. That's not to say they didn't work; by God, they worked.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Like hell; they worked hard.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Yes, they did, but they don't get an entitlement to CPP. And as we know, old age security is but a pittance. The folks I talk to say that this government, any government, has a responsibility to address those and all of those issues.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to use two minutes to respond to the very important comments made by the member for Welland. In the broader scale, if you look at this bill, it is the start of a very long conversation. I hope the government under Premier McGuinty doesn't take advantage of this situation, and tries to work co-operatively with the federal government. If he's trying to change the CPP proposal on this in the next phase of pension reform, he's shifting the tax burden, basically, to the federal government. In fact, if you increase the RRSP room or the CPP contribution, both of which are tax deductions, which means they exempt the tax on it, or there's less income for the federal government, these are really shifting responsibilities. I think the province needs

to take ownership, because they are regulated by the province. In most cases, pensions are a provincial jurisdiction area. But there are a couple of interesting provisions in the thing. The grow-in provision is a very interesting one. But this topic is so complicated that a lot of people maybe don't pay a lot of attention.

I think there are two things when we look at the pension benefit: the legislation under the Pension Benefits Act that requires that single-employer pension plans are entitled to this guarantee, if you will, that a fund have some assurance of money being there, but multiple-employer and joint pension plans are not entitled to the pension benefit. I think the member from Welland stood very strongly along with the people that these are troubling times for investors, and more importantly for pensions, which are long-term investments.

This bill doesn't really do a heck of a lot, technically. We would be supporting it primarily because of the amendments in it, but I think we're waiting for the other shoe to drop. Every time I hear a question raised on this, they try to blame Stephen Harper. So let's listen to the full debate and see what the province actually does.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Howard Hampton: I had the opportunity to listen at length to my colleague from Niagara. He raises points that I think this government has to face up to. Yes, the government can try to duck and dodge and weave and try to imply that someone else is to blame and someone else ought to take responsibility. But the fact of the matter is that Ontario, Ontario specifically, has a pension crisis. We have literally dozens and dozens of pension plans in the province that are underfunded. Nortel is one example; AbitibiBowater is another; and I could go down the long list. We have literally dozens and dozens of defined benefit pension plans in the province that are not adequately funded, which means people who have worked hard all their lives—in some cases people who have worked 30, 35, 40 years and contributed to a pension plan and were told when they retired that that pension would be there for them—are facing a situation where that is not true. This government can try to pretend that that isn't happening, it can try every strategy of ducking and dodging and weaving and hope that they can keep this below the public radar screen, but it is not below the radar screen.

What the people of Ontario need to see and need to hear from this government is, what is the pension strategy? The bill that we're debating now is very thin; it is very meagre. It is the thinnest of gruel, and it doesn't answer most of the important questions. I think that's what the member from Niagara correctly spelled out here.

0930

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I appreciated the opportunity to hear from the member from the riding of Welland. I always appreciate his comments and particularly the stories

that he brings, both humorous, in the context of the elderly gentleman from Walmart, the general, as well as his articulation of the concerns that he has for constituents in his riding and how well he knows them and their concerns.

This is one pension bill. The minister has indicated there will be a second pension bill later this year. This addresses a number of technical matters. I was pleased yesterday when the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek spoke to the matter and said that there were a number of provisions in the bill that even he, as a New Democratic member, felt were important measures, although for him not going far enough.

As the member from Welland was saying, he would like to see more. We would anticipate that, with a subsequent bill, there will be more discussion around pensions, but this is a very good beginning that's been long overdue, some 20 years since we've addressed this matter here in the Legislature.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I'm pleased to speak to this bill because I'm becoming increasingly concerned, not just for the pensions that are failing, but in fact for the 70% of the residents of this province who in effect have no pensions. With the demographics of our society, we, as representatives in this House and prior, have really ignored this enormous problem which is coming at us like an express train.

I know that this government chose to bail out some individuals; in particular, \$4.3 billion was given to the General Motors pension holders as part of the bailout, between the United States and Canada, of some \$70 billion. Unfortunately, in my reading that \$4.3 billion will not necessarily save the pension holders of General Motors, either in the United States or Canada. General Motors unfortunately just lost more money in the past year. Even though some \$70 billion worth of debt was removed from their books, they still lost money.

I hope that they continue, become profitable and perhaps solve or alleviate the problem of their pension funds, both in the United States and Canada, because no one wants to see individuals who have worked so hard for a corporation, knowing full well that they would be able to retire with adequate income, find out that in fact they're going to get little or nothing.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Member for Welland, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Let's be very clear: New Democrats, yes, will support this bill. But at the same time, we're concerned. We're frantic about the fact that the real issues aren't being addressed. The real issues are being ignored. There's a head-in-the-sand attitude from the other side. It surely cannot be a Toronto-centric attitude because the issues around pensions are as applicable to Torontonians—and perhaps even more so because of the increased cost of living here—as they are to folks down where I come from or up in Kenora-Rainy River, where Howard Hampton comes from.

Surely, in the midst of this crisis we can gather the political will to address this very fundamental issue—and none of this bullfeathers of saying, “Oh, it’s up to the federal government to do something pan-Canada.” The federal government has pension jurisdiction; so does the province of Ontario. I depend upon federal legislators to deal with theirs, and I know that the New Democrats in Ottawa are working very hard in trying to make sure that the federal jurisdiction is being addressed by the federal government. They, again, have limited success because there’s a paucity of support for that proposition up there on Parliament Hill. But here in Toronto we have jurisdiction as well.

New Democrats have made some very clear proposals: (1) increasing the pension benefits guarantee fund to \$2,500, as Arthurs recommends—end of story; and (2) develop a publicly sponsored defined benefit pension plan to which workers and non-traditional workers make contributions. The province can do it, and they should.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: No, go ahead. Speaker, I don’t mind.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Durham.

Mr. John O’Toole: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for making that small correction.

I appreciate the opportunity here, only because I think the important part here is that our party is being supportive of this issue. We want to be clear that part of what we try to do here is educate each other by listening to each other’s comments. None of us here are experts on this; let’s be very clear on that.

We could start by just clarifying some of the preliminary explanation notes in Bill 236. I think, for the general public, which would include my constituents in the riding of Durham, pensions are a big issue, but a lot of people glaze over it and just skip over it; they don’t really pay too much attention until it affects them, and it’s now starting to affect people who worked for General Motors.

I see in northern Ontario some of the plant closures and the reorganization there. It’s a big issue there, where these plants—then you’d start dealing with worker-related issues, severances and other entitlements. If companies go over the cliff, often there’s no money there to deal with these issues, which is tragic. The government has a role here to ensure some minimum amount of coverage.

I guess you could say that the big issues on pensions—pension liabilities and corporate responsibilities—really lie with the federal government under the bankruptcy protection act. The claimant’s position of the payroll, basically, or anyone on a pension, is very low down, if at all, on the list. Also, the creditors, who either supplied services or materials, would be—and banks etc. Banks would be first, I guess, if they had loans outstanding. As you go down the creditors list, you find that the payroll is basically at the end, if there’s anything left.

We’re finding in Nortel that, if they go under CCAA protection, the payroll is finished. They just scoop up all the money, and there’s nothing left. That’s a problem, and I think the federal government should work on it without changing the rules dramatically and instantly to affect the investment in the province as well as in the country. These are important rules.

I would say that governments, at all levels, have a culpable responsibility here. What I mean by that is, the previous speaker from Welland and certainly the other members of the NDP were here as cabinet ministers when the real regulation change occurred under the Pension Benefits Act. That change was the funding and the actuarial formula for funding pensions. This is where you get the glaze over the eyes. Again, I qualify anything I say as more or less just from reading recently, because this is such an important thing.

The Algoma Steel pension had a large surplus in the early 1990s, as did many pensions, actuarially. In fact, I would say that all the actuarial assumptions on pensions are wrong. I’m not a mathematician or anything close, but they’re all wrong because the assumptions are based on a 7% return on equity. If you’re getting 7%, you ought to double your money on that one. They’re based on life expectancies in the 70s, and now people are living into the 90s. People are basically going to be retiring at 50 and living to 100. They may have only worked 25 years, so they’re going to be retired twice as long as they actually worked. It doesn’t work. It simply does not work.

Return on equity, life expectancy, and the third assumption, actuarially, is the number of people contributing. Corporations used to be shaped like a pyramid: one person retired and 10 working. A nice little logical—10 people paying and new people coming in all the time. The companies of the future are flat. They’re corporate, they’re integrated globally and they don’t have what you called successor employer relations. The young people, especially the pages here, who are very bright, will live in a completely different world. I worked for General Motors for 30 years and I worked for another company for a period of time before that.

0940

There’s no pension in Ontario that’s funded—none. Even HOOPP, the hospital plan. They say it’s funded; that’s baloney. It’s not funded. And then they say there are surplus declarations. Well, a surplus means you have paid out all the money that you’re liable to pay out. Not based on age, the demographics and all these models they build—I believe that there’s no such thing as a surplus until a company is completely wound up and all debts and credits have been balanced.

When you get into the current definitions of pensions, it’s very important to start with a good understanding of the actuarial assumptions. There are really two basic types of pensions, and the pension being discussed here is the defined benefit plan. A defined benefit plan is really problematic.

Now, let’s look—it’s easier to work with round numbers—at the sunshine list, the \$100,000 list. If you’re

making \$100,000, the way pensions work is that it's basically a factor times years of service. Let's just take the 30-and-out scenario; let's take the 85 factor. How does this all work? You have a defined benefit plan, which means you get a percentage of your best three to five years of employment. The factor is usually around a 60 to 70 factor, so you're going to get about 60% of what you earned. So if you're making \$100,000 and you have an 85 factor pension—you start when you're 23 or 25—let's make it easy; 25—work for 25 years, which makes you 50. When you're about 55, you're entitled to retire. Can you imagine retiring at 55 on a fully indexed pension? The pension would be around \$62,000 a year, for life.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Must be an MP.

Mr. John O'Toole: Yeah, well, we could get into that one, too.

Now, if you're making \$200,000 a year, which some of the hospital administrators are—some of the very high-end people are making \$200,000. On a defined benefit plan? Wait a minute here: If you're making \$200,000, that means you're making about \$130,000 a year on pension. Wait a minute here: 70% of people don't have a pension, let me assure you of this. That's the defined benefit. So really we should take a look at what's being proposed here today.

What is actually being proposed around the world—I listened to a lecture when I was in London, England recently. I went to the House of Lords to listen to the esteemed debate there, and the debate, believe it or not, was all about pensions. They have a huge problem, worse than ours. It's called legacy debt, way worse than ours. Europe is riddled with it. This is not unique to Ontario, period. We're unique in the fact that we're so young. It's called legacy debt, and they're all terrified of it because these obligations are contractual.

You can't blame the employees. I don't ever want to leave that impression. They, it could be argued, forgo certain kinds of rewards called payroll, called hourly rate, called benefits, so they can take a pension, which is income after they leave. So this is a huge issue globally.

But the world is moving to an argument called a defined contribution plan. The defined contribution plan is when I start with a company—it's mostly contract employees—where pension mobility becomes a big factor. This is where the Canada pension kind of comes into this thing. I think there needs to be an overarching structure to regulate this thing.

Here's how it works: The employee contributes \$5, or whatever the amount is, and the employer contributes \$5, and that goes into a fund. That fund is your future pension. Usually they have an array of benefits or plans that you can invest in, like mutual funds. There are very few options on the equity side. It's mostly leveraged funds, monetary funds or mutual funds of some sort. They're managed. You've got to watch the management fee. Often today, the management fee is outpacing the income on the fund. And some are front-end-loaded, meaning you pay an administration fee. And some are rear-end-load-

ed—you don't see it until you pull out the money, and then you pay the fee. Now that administration fee, by the way, is going to be taxed under the HST, which is, I think, a mistake, personally, when we're trying to encourage people to invest, to protect themselves.

I do sort of support that, but it's the idea of changing these rules like that. That's just wrong. I think the employers and the employees and the government interventions and regulation need to take time to let this soak through.

We likely will move to a plan where there's pension mobility and it will likely be a plan similar to a defined contribution plan. What's missing in these plans is this: a separate fund that is a guarantee. I think we need a minimum amount, as said by the member from Welland earlier, so that people aren't left stranded. That simply is wrong. It's, in some respects, unethical when bank guys are making millions of dollars in bonuses and stuff like that and the poor person who was working as the teller or something has nothing. That is simply unethical and wrong, whoever's government at any level.

So I think there needs to be some provisions put in so that—for instance, let's say that you had a provision that you would make no less than a certain amount. This gets into the current problem that Ontario has. The pension benefits guarantee fund—I'm going to repeat that: the pension benefits guarantee fund—PBGF, is funded by the employers as an insurance against a downward market. It is completely inadequate, by the way, but it is a tax because it's self-insuring. It's debt risk attenuation.

Here's the issue, though: The government sets those rules and they know full well when they go back to the 1993 decision on Algoma—I'm trying to make this come together here—they allowed them not to fund the plans. The government intervened. They became culpable right then in 1993, when they said that they're too big to fail. Any commercial court would say, "Look, who changed these rules of the game?" Well, it was the government. The government allowed them to retool Algoma by using the pension funds surplus. It turns out the surplus wasn't a surplus. It vanished, meaning the money that was used to retool was taken out, there was no money and the employee portion of the contribution had shrunk because they retooled and modernized the plant. So they prevented a rule because it was "too big to fail," which meant they could borrow. Ford did it, General Motors did it, Algoma did it, Inco did it—all of them did it. All of the big companies too big to fail did it. They took the money out, the surpluses.

What is the problem with Vale Inco in Sudbury? Pension debt is what it is—simple. They owe about \$4.5 billion to \$5 billion to the pension fund, and the new company—I think Spanish or Russian—Vale is saying, "Hey, wait a minute here. We didn't buy the debt. We bought the ore in the ground and all of the tools on the top of the ground that crush the rock and make it into whatever it is." This whole thing at Vale is about trying to switch them from a defined benefit plan—which was fairly honest, I guess, and generous, I guess; I don't

know—to a defined contribution plan where the employee shares the risk. This is a huge problem.

I remember sitting through some commercial hearings on these things when I was assistant to the Minister of Finance, and this is where I really got engaged in the issue. I sat through and listened to these actuaries arguing back and forth. What it comes down to is this: The big issue starts with who owns the surplus. Let's say there is a windup in a company—and this Bill 236 does cover some of this—a partial windup or what they call a grow-in option. It gets too fuzzy to explain here. If I could have more time I would go on a bit; if people allowed me to, I would. I'd like to, actually.

But here's the real issue: The provisions in these plans simply will not work today. You can't explain any more than that. Companies are shaped differently; relationships with employers and employees are different. The employer itself, whether it's GE or GE Capital or GE's investment group—they're multinational, integrated, subdivided groups. You'll spend more time in court trying to find out who owes the money. So the employee and the employer both contribute an amount and it moves forward in some fund that's regulated, probably by the federal government.

0950

Canada is a very small market, actually, in terms of pools of capital. You saw yesterday what happened. The euro dropped. Canada dropped. Everyone ran to the US. It's a big capital market. They may be in debt, they may be shaky, but there is more money moving there in a day than the rest of the world combined. When people get nervous they run to two places: They run to the US dollar or they run to gold. Watch gold in this whole market. It usually trades at a 50-to-1 ratio, so it's important to keep your eye on it.

The point I'm trying to make is, government intervened in 1993, and under the defined benefit plan—there was the pension benefits guarantee fund. Most people don't understand that most employee groups aren't entitled to that fund. The only one entitled to that fund is what they call a SEPP, a single-employer pension plan. The MEPP, the multi-employer pension plan, isn't entitled to that fund. Most people haven't got this much understanding of the issue, period. That would include me, as well. That's why I think continuing this debate is very important.

The substance of this bill is marginally important. The bigger debate is between Dwight Duncan and Jim Flaherty. There have been four or five meetings. One of them was in the Northwest Territories this past winter, headed by Flaherty and other finance ministers. I believe Minister Duncan was there as well. There has been a subsequent meeting. Now there is an expert panel group, and there was an expert panel report here in this province. So we know it's a problem.

I think, in realistic terms, if you load it on to the employers, they're going to run and hide. They're going to go to other jurisdictions where they're not required to have these things. If you load it all on the employee,

that's unfair. So I think there's a role for government here, and I think you will see some of the recommendations in the expert panel's report. The expert panel, federally, I think is a very important point—because any government that moves to saying, "We're going to protect your income so it will allow you to invest it," is going to lose the payroll income tax paid on that money. And if they do, they're going to lose revenue. Governments right now are all in deficit, which is future debt.

I'd also be very careful about debt itself and how it's moving around today. These are fundamental questions. In Ontario, today's budget is about \$117 billion. Servicing the debt is about \$10 billion a year. We spend more on that than we do on pharmacy products—the big argument about that is 90% baloney. Here's the deal: If the interest rate goes up, we have a serious problem. It's going to be the same problem that Bob Rae had. The more they borrowed, the bigger the debt, the more the interest—and start paying more in interest to foreign investors or bondholders—

Hon. James J. Bradley: You can't ask any more "spend" questions.

Mr. John O'Toole: There's no question on "spend," but I think the government has to be cautious about the deficit.

When I look at your budget, I personally think it's irresponsible. I think it's completely irresponsible to be accumulating debt. Yesterday Mark Carney from the Bank of Canada said, "Watch how much debt you're carrying." He did.

These people with these huge mortgages: Get ready. Get a "for sale" sign and put it in the garage, because if it goes up and your insurance companies don't want to cover that debt, you will have a designed conclusion.

Ending on a positive note, I think there is a real willingness on the part of the province and the federal government to try to find solutions without shaking up the world. If you have large pools of capital, large investments, you'll get a better return on your investment.

Canada should have one investment fund. They say the teachers' pension fund is the best because it's our biggest. Our fund should be a Canadian fund, and that fund could leverage against the larger US funds and actually attract better returns and safer investments. So we don't want to buy Greek bonds at 21%. It sounds good, but the liabilities are very high on those kinds of investments with Greece, Portugal and Spain. They're going to collapse. This is going to be like a house of cards going over the cliff. My sense, though, is that in Canada you have a better system of controls. I know, Mr. Speaker, that you were in this business at one time yourself. I believe others in the House were as well—Mr. Wilkinson was, I think, as well.

So it's a very interesting time, but we all have a responsibility to make sure that we protect the people that we're elected to represent in some way, at sort of a minimum amount. That's my argument with the defined contribution: It's a minimum threshold.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I want to say that from time to time there are some points of agreement that New Democrats have with the Conservative Party. The member from Cambridge also made reference to this. They're both worried. Indeed, many Conservative members are worried about the fact that 70% don't have any pension whatsoever. That's a legitimate worry that they have and New Democrats have.

Of course, how we get to it in terms of the solution is obviously very different, but at least we're talking about the fact that a majority of Canadians have no pension whatsoever. We need to deal with that. The member correctly says that the battle is at the federal level, and in his view it should be at the federal level. New Democrats disagree with that, because while the larger battle happens there, if nothing goes on—because it's a meaningless pretense of a fight, or at trying to arrive at some conclusion—then you bring that battle here to the provincial level, is what New Democrats argue. If they are unwilling to do it at the federal level, we should be doing it. And I think we must.

So there are points of similarity that we have with the Conservative members, and points of disagreements as to how we get there, but at least we are both stating a concern, and that is that 70% have absolutely nothing. There's a lot to be worried about. Until we deal with that, the insecurity will get worse—and indeed it is getting worse. They have every right to be feeling insecure and to be worried about it. No one is proposing suggestions except that we, the New Democrats, have put out a modest proposal that we think they should look at. Monsieur McGuinty said, "Yeah, it's a good idea," although he hasn't moved to support it. I'll be speaking to that in about six minutes, and I'll elucidate a little more.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I noted with great interest the member's remarks in this regard. He had some interesting experience sitting in, as he did, on sessions related to the very complicated issue of pensions. One of the things we do know is that when individuals are working, they are in a much better position. The member would be, with me, pleased with the headline that we all would have seen in our local paper: "GM Puts \$235 Million into St. Catharines." I know the member, who has had experience with General Motors, will be happy when that happens.

There was some considerable criticism of our provincial government when we came to the assistance of General Motors and Chrysler, to help get them through a difficult time because of—and this member understands this probably more than most—the great impact of the automotive industry in the province of Ontario. Certainly in his region and in my region, we both recognize how important that is. So I was very heartened to see that that investment is going to be made at the engine plant in St. Catharines, securing up to 400 jobs. Of course, there's also confirmation that the six-bead transmission work that is planned for St. Catharines is going to be implemented as well.

In both cases, this is new equipment; this is something that moves to the future. The member and I both know that when General Motors moves to the future—more fuel-efficient and more efficient overall—it is positive for the products that are going to be sold. All of this helps, because there are people who make contributions to pension plans. It allows the company to be able to do that. It allows for the viability of the plan. So I was pleased to see that the policy of this government had a positive impact on General Motors.

1000

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to add a few comments this morning on this bill.

What I'd like to do in the brief time I have is talk about something that I think is maybe just as important as the bill, and that is creating the appropriate response within the community at large. I don't think that there has been enough understanding within the general public of the whole issue of pensions—defined benefits and otherwise. People have grown up feeling a security that I think isn't matched by their bank accounts. The kind of thing that I'm talking about is looking at, for instance—I think it's Saturday mornings in the *Globe and Mail*—the continuing series on taking individuals and looking at their finances and projecting, "Are these people able to retire?"—giving, then, the readership an opportunity to have a look at how others are organizing their money. Very often, people in these series have totally unrealistic ideas about their ability to retire and maintain a lifestyle that they think would be appropriate.

I also had a conversation with a woman who does financing at a car dealership. She came to me with a real concern about the number of young people—I'm talking late 20s, early 30s—who've already declared personal bankruptcy, and then think, "Okay, now I've got myself straightened out and paid my charge cards off; I need to borrow money to buy a car." And they have no concept of the implications of personal bankruptcy. They have no idea what lies in store for them—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Questions and comments?

The member for Durham, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like to thank the member from Trinity-Spadina. Yes, I do look forward to his remarks, and I was appreciative of the Minister of Municipal Affairs bringing some relevance to this.

In my remarks, I forgot to adequately thank the contributors to the Arthurs report, the expert panel in Ontario. Their work is very important, and I think it sets a benchmark where we can all learn a lot. I would recommend that people get a summary or a briefing on it.

It's really important to put this in context as well that in Ontario, 70% of people—those are our constituents—don't have a pension and maybe don't think about those kinds of things, but it's very important that we set some sort—as the economy—for a lot of worthy reasons, often.

Ontario's a big player in the overall scheme. There are 11,000 defined benefit plans in Canada, of which 4,100 are right here in Ontario. We need to make sure we carry our load on the redesign of whatever the solutions are, going forward. I think, retroactively, people under the best of understanding and the best of intentions did not deliberately choose a pension that would be bankrupt and then find themselves living under the bridge. I think of Nortel, but I also think of General Motors. When we read the headlines—I'm looking at one here this morning; this is under my search called "favourite stocks," and this headline today that I'm reading says—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I remind the member that you don't read from electronic devices in the Legislature, please.

Mr. John O'Toole: It says that General Motors is still called, "Government Motors" because they really still have an unfunded liability of \$27 billion. This is not solved and will not be solved.

There are two ways of valuing pensions. The two ways, the solvency rules, are as a going concern or as a windup. If it's a going concern, the rules for funding it, actuarially, are not the same as if it's a windup, and the federal government has a provision as well under the—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm happy to speak to Bill 236, An Act to amend the Pension Benefits Act. I want to say that as is typical of so much of what this government does, it's a timid approach to pension reform. It's always very, very slow—don't go too fast, don't upset anybody, don't do too much, because otherwise you will have a lot of people on your back, because even when you don't do too much, you have a whole lot of people on your back. They're so profoundly timid and worried and afraid, they sometimes don't know what they want to do.

This is one big issue, I've got to tell you. I come from a family where my mother worked at home all of her life and had no pension, which was the case of many women in the past: They had no pension whatsoever for the work they did for a long time in the home. My father worked in construction. The pension he had, being in the union, was \$70 a month—not a whole lot.

People are very insecure about their future. They were insecure in the past and they are more insecure now. You see financial markets melting and people are saying, "What's going to happen to us?" and, more specifically, "What's going to happen to me?" They have every right to be worried.

In Ontario, occupational pension coverage has eroded from a high point in 1985 of just under 40% of Ontario workers to about 34% in 2005. We're in 2010; it's probably about 31% or 32% at this time. It's going to get worse, in my view.

Many observers predict a further significant decline in defined benefits coverage in the near future, especially in light of the decline of the unionized sector during the current recession. And a defined benefit plan is a plan that every worker should have access to.

No one understands "defined benefit," "defined contribution." If you ask a young man or young woman of age 25, 26, 27, 28, they don't have a clue what it is. Most young men and women believe they are going to be working, and they're going to be working for a secure future of sorts; they are going to have a job and it's well paid, and you don't have to worry about pensions, because you're never going to get there until you get there. So they don't understand a defined benefit plan, where the contributions of workers and employers are put together in an equal manner so that by the end of 25 or 30 years, you have a defined plan based on years of work, and you've got a defined sum of money based on those contributions. It's a good thing for workers. It's a good thing for men and women who toil in every workplace in this province.

"Defined contribution" means the employer gives you a few bucks—maybe \$1,000, maybe \$2,000, maybe \$3,000, maybe \$4,000—and then you put that away into your own investment account. If the markets work well, God bless; you'll have a few dollars. If they collapse, you're in trouble.

Most of the defined benefit plans work well. Some have lost money, as la Caisse de dépôt in Quebec did, because they invested in those derivatives in the US. They lost close to \$38 billion. Some have made some bad investments. The majority of our investments—while here the teachers' pension fund lost some money, it wasn't so bad. They're still good, well-managed pension plans that give a greater benefit to workers than any other contribution plan that we have, that we have seen and that we have witnessed in the collapse of our markets in the last year or two.

We have seen a desire by employers to whittle away at pensions. They are eroding those pensions. They're saying, "We can't afford defined benefit plans anymore." Oh? What can you afford? And what is good for workers? Insecurity? Less than they had? Less than they are entitled to, to be able to retire with some dignity, with a few bucks, to be able to say, "I feel okay; I can survive"?

It's okay for the employer to say, "We can't afford it." It's not okay for the men and women who have to rely on paltry sums after age 60 or 65 and after working for a lifetime to be able to receive some benefit that they can feel good about, so they don't have to stress about where their money's coming from.

1010

What we as MPPs have, thanks to Mike Harris, is a contribution plan. God bless him; he left with a healthy sum of \$800,000 or so. He was able to invest that. I'm sure he's doing okay. I understand he's earning \$80,000 a month or something by serving on 10 boards at a time, because they pay former Premiers to be on the boards, just to sit there and say, "Hi," and things like that. He did okay, and some of the old members didn't do too badly. I only had four years and a half of vested money. If you add up what I might have if I retired now, I would probably have \$15,000 a year in my pension for up to 20 years of service. The new members—

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It's everybody here; we are all at fault here.

The new members get absolutely squat. If you don't have your own wealth, God bless you. Those who have a contribution plan, whether it's in this place or somewhere else, are out of luck. With some good luck, assuming you're still working and you're able to put a few dollars aside, assuming you do that or assuming you can, it might not be so bad.

We might be better off than those seniors who have nothing but the Canada pension plan. If you've worked for 35 or 40 years, the maximum is \$11,000 a year. The old age security maximum, I think, is \$5,500. The guaranteed income supplement—I don't know what that is, but that's for people who are absolutely poor. But for those who have worked, your maximum pension is \$11,000, assuming you're entitled to the max, and the old age security is close to \$5,000. You've got \$16,000 a year to pay your home taxes that are rising every year, to pay your gas bills and hydro bills that are rising every year, to pay for your cable, to pay for your telephone, to pay for just basic things. The majority of people just can't make ends meet anymore.

I'm with those people who worry. I have been a supporter of the unions because at least with unions, the majority of them have managed to squeeze out a pension from their employers. They're able to, through collective agreements, make sure that there are benefits and pensions. The majority of those who have pensions are in the unionized sector. God bless, because if they weren't here, there wouldn't be a pension for many of those workers. Because of the pension workers and what they negotiate, those who are not in unions get the same benefit for sitting down and waiting for the unionized sector to get slapped around by the media and the corporate sector and everybody else for doing what they should be lobbying for as well, to deserve the benefits that unionized workers fight for. Unionized workers give those who are not unionized benefits that they don't have to sweat for.

This bill is an act to amend the Pension Benefits Act. Okay, we agree with a few things; we disagree with a few other things, but it doesn't touch on this big, big topic: that close to 70% have no pension. Monsieur McGuinty, the Premier, and others say, "No, we're lobbying the federal government." Oh, yeah, that's great; you're doing a great job. They sure are listening to you at the federal level. Boy, you have a lot of clout at the federal level, because they're sitting at the table, they meet every six months and they meet again every other six months. There are elections, and then there are more meetings. Oh, yeah, you have such powerful suasion with the federal Conservative Party. It's called motionless motion; nothing happens as we move.

Speaker, you know that the health care that we have at this moment wasn't initiated by the federal Liberals or the federal Conservative Party; it began because Tommy Douglas fought for it in Saskatchewan. We have a health

care plan because a New Democrat from Saskatchewan made it happen, and the Liberals, so afraid were they that he would get re-elected as a federal member, said, "We have to do something. We have to institute a national plan." Now, God bless, the Liberals take advantage of that fact and say, "We did it." Thank God the Liberals have New Democrats to push them; otherwise, they would be in constant motionless motion, pretending they're moving and never moving anywhere except standing still. That is the legacy of Liberals.

I say to you, provinces have the power to lead. McGuinty, mon ami the Premier, has the power to do something. That's leadership. Leadership isn't to say, "Yes, we're pushing the federal Conservative Party," that doesn't want to do anything on this issue. That is not leadership; that's motionless motion. Leadership means, "I will do something for my folks here in Ontario. I will bring in a plan and force the Liberal government to respond," as the Liberals did with Tommy Douglas in the early 1960s.

Mr. Jeff Leal: No, no, no. There was a speech in 1960 in Kingston. I'll get you a copy.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Member for Peterborough, order.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Send me a coffee, Jeff—a coffee from Peterborough.

He doesn't want to admit that it was Tommy Douglas who did it. It just doesn't want to come out of his mouth. He can't help himself.

Mr. Jeff Leal: He was a contributor, but—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Oh, I see. Tommy Douglas was a contributor. That is nice. Tommy Douglas had his tires slashed. His daughter was intimidated. His whole family was intimidated. Tommy Douglas was intimidated and pushed by the insurance companies, even derided by the Liberals at the time, and other Tories—derided, pushed, humiliated, harassed.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I don't know.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: But not for Jeff, oh no. For Jeff it was Pearson, the great leader, who did this, and he was pushing the cart that Tommy Douglas was riding in. He was right behind him, saying, "We're pushing; we're right behind you." Send me a coffee with that copy there, Jeff.

Anyway, I say to you, we've got big things. We've got to do some more serious stuff. We've got to introduce our own pension plan that should be flexible, that should be portable. Our fund, the one we propose, would be a defined benefit plan—not a contribution plan; a defined benefit plan with a guaranteed benefit, much like the CPP. Every worker in Ontario who is already enrolled in a good-quality workplace pension plan would be automatically enrolled in the plan, but would have the freedom to opt out. All workers who have opted out would be automatically re-enrolled in the plan three years from the day they opted out, and would have to formally opt out again if they wanted to remain outside the plan.

Workers and employers would be required to contribute to the new plan equally. The full contribution rate

would be phased in over time and employers would be required to contribute to the OPP as long as the employee remains in the plan. In other words, it would be voluntary for the employee but compulsory for the employer, should the employee choose to participate in the plan. Employees could top up their minimum contributions, but employers would not be required to match the top-up. There would be a cap on the maximum that an employee could contribute in any given year. We can do this.

Time is running out. It happens all the time.

We need some leadership. Our plan is a good plan for McGuinty to take. Just take it and make it yours. Take it and make it yours and lead. Don't wait for Harper to do something, because he's not.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 8, this House is in recess until 10:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1018 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: This morning I want to introduce mothers and their children from the Massey Centre: Nicole Wahl, Victoria Hospedales, Emily Prowse, Jan Higgins, Yvette Reeves, Janicia Anthony, Amanda Cain, Ariel Lunanski, Marnie Pellman, Huva Eldaior, Rachelle Woldegiorgif, Zvart Dekarn, Ronetto Cobham and staff from the Massey Centre, Aleema Khan and Jennifer Morgan. Welcome to the Legislature.

Mr. Jeff Leal: It's a real delight for me to introduce two individuals in the members' east gallery today: Pat Melanson, who is my executive assistant from Peterborough—Pat has been with me since the fall of 2003—and Matt Stoeckle, who's a constituency assistant of mine and has been with me for about two years. His father John is a member of the Peterborough Lakefield Community Police Services, a board in Peterborough. We really welcome them to Queen's Park today.

Hon. James J. Bradley: It's my pleasure to introduce to members in the Legislature today Mr. Lawrence Stasiuk, president of the Ontario Association of Landscape Architects; Linda Irvine, president of the Canadian Society of Landscape Architects; and Doug Carrick, president of the American Society of Golf Course Architects. It is a pleasure to have them with us. They hosted us this morning.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'd like to introduce the mother of Sabina Midgen, who is one of our pages. Colleen Black is here with us in the Legislature today.

Mr. Dave Levac: Making his way into the House shortly is a constituent of mine. Visiting here to discuss some important issues with some of the members is Jeff McAllister, from my riding of Brant.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: Today is the National Day of Mourning, when we pay our respects to the workers who have been killed, injured or suffered an illness as a result of work-related incidents. I'd like to seek unanimous

consent from members for all of us to wear a black-and-yellow ribbon in honour of these workers and to show our commitment to preventing these tragedies from happening again.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

I'd like to this opportunity on behalf of page Carrington Knight and the leader of the third party to welcome Carrington's mother, Jean Lewis Knight; father, Steven Knight; and brothers, Devan Knight, Nelson Knight and Spensir Knight, to the members' gallery today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

ORAL QUESTIONS

WIND TURBINES

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Premier. Just like his plan to teach sex education to six-year-olds, Dalton McGuinty thinks he knows better than families when it comes to industrial wind farms. Hopefully, just like his sex education plan, Dalton McGuinty will distance himself from what his minister said during question period, admit he wasn't listening to families and offer to do a "serious rethink" of industrial wind farms. The opposition day motion I proposed is his chance to do just that. Can we count on your support for municipalities that want you to give back planning authority over industrial wind projects that you stripped away in your so-called Green Energy Act?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm pleased to take the question and have an opportunity to speak to this. We welcome the continuing debate. I do not support the position taken by my honourable colleague opposite, nor the position embraced by the official opposition.

We think it's really important that we pursue clean energy opportunities in Ontario. We're a little late, frankly, when it comes to this. They started harnessing the power of the wind in order to generate electricity, they tell me, in the 1880s. But I'm glad that we've gone from, I think, some 10 wind turbines to 700.

I look forward, in the supplementaries, to outlining in a bit more detail why I think it's important for all of us that we find a way to move forward on this.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: To the families from Wind Concerns Ontario who are at Queen's Park today, it sounds like the Premier thinks the reason he gave for a flip-flop that humiliated Ministers Papatello and Domrowsky on the need to consult families applies only to teaching sex courses to six-year-olds and not to industrial wind farms being built right outside their back door.

If he had seriously changed his ways, Dalton McGuinty would listen to families from Prince Edward-Hastings, Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, Nipissing, Essex, Scarborough Bluffs and Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock. They want input into where you put your industrial wind farms. They want an independent study that

shows your industrial projects are safe for them and safe for the environment. Can you do better than offering the word of Samsung or Minister Gerretsen?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to welcome the families that are here today and I want them to know we are listening very carefully to the concerns that they are expressing.

But I want to say that we've taken a long time to consider the policy that we have put in place. The choices aren't all easy when it comes to electricity. We've decided that it's important to eliminate coal-fired generation. That's something that compromises the health of our children and contributes to global warming, so we want to shut that down. Gas-fired generation is not easy either. It does contribute to global warming. But when it comes to wind turbines, we now have in place the most aggressive policies in all of North America when it comes to location, noise emission levels and all those kinds of things—in fact, they're some of the strongest in the world. More than that, we're now funding a research chair devoted to putting in place a longitudinal study so we can ensure that we are in fact not compromising the health of Ontarians. I think we're doing exactly what we need to do at this point in our history.

1040

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. John Yakabuski: This isn't the same Dalton McGuinty who people thought they voted for. It's not even the same Dalton McGuinty of last month, who called municipalities "a mature, responsible level of government." This is the Dalton McGuinty whose Green Energy Act overrides municipalities and cuts out local families so he can drive his agenda of building industrial wind farms in everyone's backyard but his own. Ontario PCs stand with families on deciding where to locate industrial wind projects in their communities, not so-called experts and elites.

Will you show that your humiliation of Minister Pupa-tello was not in vain and that you've truly taken to heart the need to consult families and support my opposition day motion today?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I certainly support my colleague's right to move ahead with his opposition day motion. It's not something that I can support, of course.

Let me tell you about one of the other benefits, apart from us harnessing the clean power of the wind for Ontario families in a way that does not compromise their health. In addition to that, so far, the investments that we have landed—and they total over \$16 billion—will translate into 36,000 clean energy jobs in the province of Ontario.

Some of the strongest support we have for our wind turbine program comes from the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, which is a really important constituent group in rural Ontario. We've given this a great deal of thought. We've listened to a lot of people who think it is important, as part of a progressive energy plan, to ensure that we're harnessing the clean power of the wind.

WIND TURBINES

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: My question is to the Premier. The Planning Act allows families to have input into local planning decisions, whether it's building shopping malls or condo developments or even some home renovations that get built in their community. Why are you blocking them from having that same say on where industrial wind farms are built?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I think I explained very fully yesterday but I'm more than happy to discuss this today. There are numerous opportunities for public input and involvement in renewable project planning. In fact, the proponent of the project must—it's not "may"; it's "must"—consult with the municipality and the community. It's not an option. Their concerns must—and I repeat, must—be documented in their application and must indicate how the proponent is addressing these issues and concerns. Following the submission to the Ministry of the Environment, the application is posted on the Environmental Bill of Rights for 30 to 60 days. There is plenty of room for consultation on these projects. Municipalities must be involved in that decision-making.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: That's a lot of talk, but you know what? My interpretation of communication is two-way. Your communication is one-way: "You will do this."

Last month the Premier said that he believed municipalities were "a mature, responsible level of government." But apparently he did not mean when it comes to the fundamental role of municipalities, which is local planning. He dismissively waves off health and environmental concerns, but his massive industrial wind projects have barely begun and already media reports that blades of a windmill killed an eagle and local experts say that industrial wind farms are scaring animals from their habitat.

Why does the Premier think Dalton knows best when it comes to putting large industrial wind turbines in place?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Here we go again on the whole myriad of Tory contradictions. You stand in this place time and time again and talk about red tape, yet you don't support our Open Ontario plan to get rid of red tape. You stand in your place to talk about red tape, yet today you're standing here saying we should create more red tape when it comes to the approval of very important renewable energy projects. You stand in your place today and you talk about supporting municipalities, yet what did you do to municipalities when you were in power? You took the most historic, draconian moves to down-load responsibilities to municipalities and costs: social services, housing, public transit, land ambulance, public health. And you forced on municipality after municipality amalgamations they didn't want. Did you consult on any of those? No, you did not.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: Mr. Speaker, the minister went off topic again. We're talking about democracy and you stripping municipalities of democracy. Families in Scarborough Bluffs were told of a plan to build up to 100 wind turbines from Leslie Street to Ajax. Some took their concerns to Toronto city council about this industrial project killing birds and wildlife, fouling water, ruining the waterfront and posing risks to health and safety. To nobody's surprise, the city did nothing. They couldn't do anything because your so-called Green Energy Act neutered municipalities.

Will the McGuinty Liberals support our opposition day motion and restore public accountability and public confidence in planning for industrial wind farms?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm going to respond to that in the words of the Orillia Packet and Times in their editorial today. They said:

"Something has to be done immediately to get the province, and the world population for that matter, to stop polluting the planet. And to that end, the McGuinty government is pushing through the Green Energy Act....

"But to make the change to green power from such old polluting technologies as coal, planning must be on a large scale."

Unless the Tories can come up with another plan to get renewable energy producers up and running quickly in Ontario, they should accept that the government is doing what needs to be done. We are doing what needs to be done. We're cleaning up the air of this planet so that future generations have cleaner air to breathe, so that we can improve the health of future generations, and we're creating a green energy hub here in this province to create jobs. That's in the interests of Ontarians, not the plan that you—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Mr. Peter Kormos: To the Premier: Today is the National Day of Mourning for workers killed and injured on the job, but every day is a day of mourning in Ontario because an Ontario family suffers the agony of losing a husband, a wife, a child or a parent through workplace injury almost every day in Ontario.

Why is the McGuinty government allowing this carnage to continue?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: It is a day of mourning, and it is a time for us to remember all those who have lost their lives in the workplace, those who have been injured, those who suffer illness in the workplace.

Human suffering—often we may talk about it in this House or in policy as a statistic, but behind every one of those statistics is a life story. That's why our government has doubled our efforts. We've doubled the number of inspectors we have out in the field to ensure that employers are adhering to their responsibilities, employing the best practices when it comes to health and safety. We want to

make sure that anyone who goes to work in the morning does their work and comes home safe and sound to their family. That's what we're working towards every day. That is my number one priority at the Ministry of Labour.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Between 1999 and 2008, work-related deaths increased by almost 50%. More and more workers are dying due to the criminal negligence of their employers. Why isn't the government prosecuting employers who are responsible for the death or injury of hard-working and responsible workers?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: We are all saddened when there is a fatality in the workplace or a serious injury. Ministry of Labour inspectors, as I said, are out there in the field every single day, investigating incidents to ensure that the Occupational Health and Safety Act is followed and enforced. I can tell the member that over the last four years, the Ministry of Labour has successfully convicted almost 4,000 companies and individuals for workplace health and safety violations.

The member, I believe, is speaking to the Westray bill, which is federal legislation. Under that legislation, he would know that it speaks to criminal charges. It's the responsibility of police and crown attorneys to determine when criminal charges are warranted for a workplace injury or fatality.

1050

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Peter Kormos: You see, Speaker, that's why I put the question to the Premier, because since 2004, the Criminal Code of Canada has enabled the prosecution of corporate executives, directors and managers who recklessly disregard the safety of workers.

Hundreds of workers have been killed on the job and millions injured in Ontario since the Criminal Code was amended in 2004. Holding employers responsible for workplace deaths is the only sure way to improve workplace safety. It's this government's Attorney General, Minister of Labour and Solicitor General who are responsible for ensuring that the Criminal Code is enforced in the province of Ontario.

Why won't the government make full use of the Criminal Code and stop the needless and tragic killing of Ontario workers by sending bad bosses to jail?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: Any one death is one death too many in the province of Ontario. But the truth is, to the member, that in Ontario we have seen a downward trend in the number of fatalities in the workplace. We will continue to do all we can to ensure that our workers are healthy and safe when they go to work and that they come home healthy and safe at the end of the day.

That is why we have a strong strategy, a plan. It's called Safe at Work Ontario. We work with labour groups, we work with employers and we work with employees, because it's everyone's responsibility to make sure that people are safe when they're at work and that they do come home safe and sound at the end of the day.

We've also launched an expert advisory panel led by Tony Dean. We're doing a comprehensive review of our health—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Premier. People along Toronto's Eglinton Avenue corridor have been waiting more than 20 years for a dedicated transit line that would spare them the long commutes they endure each and every day. Eglinton corridor residents vividly remember Mike Harris's decision to kill the Eglinton subway in 1995 after tens of millions of dollars had already been spent on construction by an NDP government. Will this Premier commit to having the shovels in the ground on the Eglinton LRT by the end of this year, or will he join Mike Harris in dashing the hopes of Eglinton corridor residents?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I know that my honourable colleague will want to take the opportunity when chatting with her constituents to disabuse them of any notion that somehow our record when it comes to public transit is in any way comparable to the previous government's record. We spent \$9.3 billion in public transit across Ontario, which is \$9.3 billion more than the previous government spent, and we're very proud of that.

With respect to Toronto itself: \$3.5 billion since 2003. In addition to that, we've turned over a portion of our gas tax. It's a provincial gas tax. We've turned it over to our municipal partners. In the case of the city of Toronto, they've received close to \$700 million over the first five years of the program. We are at present investing \$870 million to extend the TTC subway to York region. I think that's real, solid evidence of our continuing commitment to public transit in Toronto.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: The Premier didn't answer the question. The question was very simple: Will the Liberals commit to having the shovels in the ground on the full Eglinton LRT this year, yes or no?

I can only assume that the reason the Premier didn't answer the question is that the answer is, in fact, no. The planning work on this vital project is complete. Eglinton residents shouldn't have to wait any longer. Will the Premier commit to having the shovels in the ground on the Eglinton LRT by the end of this year, or is he prepared to go down in history as the next Mike Harris of transportation?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: That is surely the unkindest cut of all. But there's something I want to refer my colleague to. In the Toronto Star there's a piece submitted by Michael Warren, an expert with whom I'm sure my colleague is familiar. He says, in part, as follows:

"To be fair, McGuinty has done more to advance the transit agenda in this region than any Premier since Bill Davis. He has given tangible leadership to the idea that transportation is a regional issue and that it requires regional solutions."

We want to continue to find ways to invest in public transit. In fact, we are doing that as we speak; that is, there are jobs that are under way right now. We look forward to working with Metrolinx and making sure we get the best possible responsible schedule in place when it comes to investing in these new projects.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I just don't understand, really, why the Premier refuses to answer a very simple question. I certainly know that the member from Eglinton-Lawrence would breathe a sigh of relief if the Premier simply answered, "Yes." That Liberal member held an emergency meeting last night to try and justify his government's \$4-billion Transit City cut. I'm told that he had a really tough time offering up a truly legitimate excuse.

The Premier can make things easy for his Toronto colleagues and Toronto commuters. Will he commit to having shovels in the ground on the Eglinton LRT by the end of this year? Simple question, simple answer; will the Premier simply say yes or no?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I really wish life was that simple, but there are some complexities associated with getting the timing of these kinds of projects right. We have recently referred the scheduling of some really important projects over to the people of Metrolinx; they've got their eye on the big picture. We told them that we are going to provide all necessary funding. We won't be able to provide it as quickly as we had originally intended because we were side-swiped by a global recession, and I think most people understand that.

I want to reassure my colleague, her constituents, the people of Toronto and all Ontarians that our resolve when it comes to investing in public transit remains as strong as ever, and we will find a way forward, notwithstanding the fact that we are challenged when it comes to some aspects of our finances right now.

CURRICULUM

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: My question is for the Premier. The confusion over the sex ed curriculum continues to grow. It appears the only people who are more confused than Ontario families about the government's plans for the curriculum now are the Premier and his minister.

After refusing to engage parents, the Premier flip-flopped, hanging his Acting Premier and education minister out to dry in the process. He said the curriculum would be shelved, and on Monday, the education minister added that the sex ed curriculum would not be ready for fall because, "What's important is we take the time to do it right." But yesterday the Premier did it to his minister again, insisting guidelines will be in place for this fall.

Why would the Premier keep important details about his plan from the minister and, more importantly, from parents?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We look forward to engaging parents on the subject of a very important matter that affects all our children, which is sex education in our

schools. I think it's important that we take that time and listen to parents. That's perfectly in keeping with the approach that we brought when it comes to improving the quality of our schools and education generally.

We listened to parents, for example, when it came to smaller classes. We listened to them when they said, "We want peace and stability in our schools; we are sick and tired of the labour strife that characterized our schools under the Conservative government." They said, "Help ensure that our children graduate from schools," and I'm proud to report that we have 16,500 more graduates on an annual basis. They said, "Help us get our test scores up." We're doing that; they are up 13%, on average.

We think it's important to listen to the parents to ensure we are getting the education of our children right.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Mr. Speaker, through you again to the Premier, it's little wonder that parents are confused, because there was no answer in that question. The Premier should not be surprised that parents are confused about his plans to teach sex education, beginning in grade 1: (1) there was no consultation with parents; (2) there was an attempt to bury the curriculum without any announcement; and (3) the plan supposedly had the support of Catholic bishops—we found out that this was wrong. There was a statement that there would be one curriculum for all school boards, and then we found out there were secret negotiations for a different curriculum with Catholic school boards. No wonder parents are confused.

Why should parents trust anything that you say about your sex ed curriculum?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We look forward, as I say, to engaging parents in a matter that is very important to them, and it's something that I think we all agree needs to be done. The fact of the matter is that the curriculum, when it comes to sex ed, is now 12 years old, and the fact is also that our children have much more access today to information, some of it reliable, some of it completely unreliable, and we think the best way to present that information to our children is through the classroom and through their teachers.

We want to listen to parents to make sure we get the curriculum content just right. That's in keeping with the approach that we've brought to education generally. Parents told us, for example, they wanted more textbooks, so we've invested \$500 million more, on an annual basis, in more textbooks. They said they'd like to have more music, art and drama in the classroom, so we've hired 3,700 elementary specialty teachers in those areas. They said they want clean and safe school buildings, so we have built 400 new schools and there are 12,000 repair and renovation projects complete or under way. It's important to listen to parents when it comes to education.

1100

SOCIAL SERVICES

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Premier. Massey Centre, in my riding, provides support for teen

mothers and their babies. A number of them are here today. It's been on strike for a week now. The centre's services keep teen mothers together with their babies, babies who might otherwise be taken into the child protection system at great expense and great emotional pain to all.

A decade of underfunding has driven the care workers out on strike. Will you commit to proper funding of this centre so it can settle the strike?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: As I have had the privilege to stand in this House and say before, I'm pleased to welcome the parents and staff from the Massey Centre here today.

As I have said, given the nature of the current labour dispute, I'm not able to intervene at this time, but I do continue to encourage both sides to work out and resolve this dispute as quickly as possible. As a mother myself, I want to say that I understand the importance of child care. It was very important to me.

I know it's important to the members in this House that the child care centre at Massey is open and it will continue to serve the preschool-aged children. The prenatal residential program will be closed for the duration of the strike, but the Massey Centre has arranged alternate accommodation for all residents to ensure that they continue to get the supports that they need.

We believe in child care. Just yesterday, we announced \$51 million in investments to stabilize the child care—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Back to the Premier, because the buck stops with you: Everybody understands that this recession presents difficulties. People understand that there is a dispute under way. They also understand that moms and babies need support. They know that children and families need daycare. They understand that the funds have been frozen for this centre for years, even when the economy was good. That has damaged the relationship between the staff and the centre. You have the power to fund this centre properly, to treat people with fairness. Will you do that?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: To the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: We can all agree that the Massey Centre for Women does provide invaluable service to the community. I'm working closely with my colleague the Minister of Children and Youth Services on this matter. We both expect the parties to do all that they can, to work as hard as they can, to set aside those differences and get a collective agreement done. Our focus at this time is to ensure that we're doing everything possible to support and assist the parties. As I understand it, the parties have agreed to meet for further talks with a Ministry of Labour mediator. This is a good thing.

We all know that a collective agreement is a stable agreement, a productive agreement and a fair agreement. This is what we want so that the Massey Centre can continue to do the great work they do every day.

PHARMACISTS

Mr. David Oraziotti: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. My constituents have been hearing from pharmacists that they do want to be paid directly for their services and that they do not want a rebate system. At the same time, large pharmacy chains are claiming that the elimination of professional allowances will result in health care cuts.

I want to be sure that my constituents and all Ontarians understand that the proposed drug reforms will benefit them. Seniors in my riding are especially concerned about the level of care they receive from their pharmacists. Minister, can you tell us how the elimination of professional allowances will affect Ontarians?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The biggest reason we pay so much more for generic drugs in this province is the payment of these so-called professional allowances from generic companies to the pharmacies. Twenty-six per cent of Ontarians say that they have not filled or renewed a prescription because they cannot afford to do that. By eliminating these professional allowances, we're able to cut the cost of generic drugs by at least 50% and also clean up a system that was open to widespread abuse. Our proposed reforms will make our system transparent by removing these allowances. Instead, we will pay pharmacists directly for services that improve the health of their customers.

We're also committed to supporting pharmacists in rural and underserviced areas. That's why CARP, the seniors' advocacy—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. David Oraziotti: Thank you, Minister. I know that Ontarians are now gaining a greater understanding of just how excessive our drug costs are, but it's also important that my constituents know that the money previously spent on professional allowances will go toward lower drug costs and better services for every Ontarian.

There has been much discussion around consultation and negotiations with pharmacists. We've heard that the pharmacists want to talk about the proposed reforms. Our pharmacists are important members of our community and many people rely on their medical advice. Minister, what are we doing to ensure that pharmacists also have a chance to be heard?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I want Ontarians and I want pharmacists to know that we want to talk to them. We're determined to get lower drug prices for Ontarians and we're determined to get fair compensation for pharmacists. I have sent the various pharmacy organizations a letter indicating that I want to have that healthy discussion with them and I want to have it soon. I understand that professional pharmacists are willing to start a constructive dialogue with government. I'm encouraged by this, especially after the industry officials have cancelled two previously scheduled meetings with my staff. They told me they couldn't meet until late in May.

Ontarians have been asking me, "Why are we paying up to five times as much for drugs in Ontario than in states

in the United States?" I want them to know that it's unacceptable. We are determined to move forward with our plan to lower the price of drugs in Ontario. It's the right thing to do—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

TAXATION

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My question is to the Premier. As the countdown to July 1 looms, the McGuinty Liberals will again shrink family budgets with their greedy HST. Cliff Liddle of Guelph says he is in favour of conservation: "All our electricity bills will still increase, not to mention how the ... HST will increase our bills." He's right. After Dalton McGuinty's energy bill adds \$350 a year in taxes to energy bills, Dalton McGuinty's revenue minister will add 13% HST to energy bills and more. The member for Guelph hasn't asked, so I will: Will your greedy HST be charged on top of the \$350-a-year energy taxes that you already intend to add to the energy bills of Ontario families?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Revenue.

Hon. John Wilkinson: I'll tell you one thing about our member from Guelph: At least she knows how to add; at least she understands the nature of our tax reform.

I just heard the member opposite say that there is going to be a 13% increase on the price of energy. Nothing could be further from the truth. I would remind you to go to our website, where the facts are clearly laid out. I know that perhaps you weren't speaking to your federal member, who obviously does not agree with you since he voted for the fact that on July 1, the federal government will be the sole tax collector in regard to sales taxes in the province of Ontario.

What the people of Dufferin-Caledon want, what the people of Guelph want and what the people in my riding want are jobs. This tax reform is all about ensuring that our companies can compete for jobs in the 21st century. That's exactly why we're doing it and that's exactly why we'll—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Minister, what the people of Guelph want, what the people of Dufferin-Caledon want and what the people of Ontario want is some integrity and some honesty.

I asked a very basic question. The Minister of Energy has already added increases to energy bills. My question is, are you going to tack on to that the additional HST that is scheduled to start on July 1? Simple question, simple answer.

Hon. John Wilkinson: Why don't we just get the facts on the record? Did you not just tell everybody here that the HST would be an increase of 13% on energy? That is factually incorrect, and I say to the member that it is absolutely important that we do not scaremonger. There will not be an additional—the federal government today charges 5% GST on energy in the province of

Ontario. That's exactly why, under the HST, there will be one set of rules. The HST of 13% will apply to energy, and we're taking all of that money and permanently cutting taxes for people in business, something that you used to believe in on that side of the House; something that we're doing here to make sure that our businesses are competitive so that they, in turn, will be able to hire our children and our grandchildren in the future. That is why we're doing this. There is nothing more important that we can do. The single most important thing—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

1110

FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My question is to the Minister of Education. Minister, you're advertising full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds at selected schools, but parents have no idea who is going to provide the before- and after-school care. Without before- and after-school care, this is not really full-day anything. Are you prepared to guarantee that your plan will provide before- and after-school care, in the school, for every child enrolled in the full-day kindergarten program next year?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: Actually, I do want to thank the honourable member for supporting the bill that was passed yesterday in the Legislative Assembly. We also appreciate the input that you have provided that has helped shape the piece of legislation that we passed yesterday and are now able to move forward with.

With respect to our commitment to full-day learning in schools, we have phase one that is rolling out in the fall. You know that that does include some 597 schools, so for families in the catchment of those schools, absolutely there will be full-day learning available for all of the students, the four- and five-year-olds, who are registered in those schools.

We are hoping to announce phase two schools very soon, and we expect that in 2015-16, all schools in Ontario will be providing the full-day learning program.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm looking for clarity; I'm not sure I got that.

Pascal's seamless day means that parents drop off and pick up their child at one location—the school. It does not mean kindergarten in one location and before- and after-school care at a different location provided by a different system or different provider.

Your announcement yesterday will produce a patchwork of services and a hit-or-miss approach across the province. Some children will have before- and after-school care and others will not. Some children will have continuity of programming and others will not. Some children will remain at the school for the full day and others will be moving between two locations, the school and the daycare, twice a day. Some daycares might provide transportation between the school and the daycare; others may rely on parents to find their own transportation.

Why are you creating this logistical nightmare for parents?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: Actually, I think it's important for the honourable member to appreciate that we passed the legislation yesterday. We are working on the regulations. The honourable member was present at committee, where some of the issues that he has just referred to today were identified.

We do want to do everything we can. Our expectation, of course, is that the before- and after-school programs will take place, operated by school boards, in a school location. We do know that there are some locations in the province of Ontario where, at the present time, other providers are providing the wraparound services. What we've said is that we want it transitioned so boards will be required to provide four- and five-year-olds programs, but we understand that there may be contractual agreements that they must respect for the—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

TAXATION

Mr. David Zimmer: My question is for the Minister of Revenue. My constituents up in Willowdale are kind of confused and anxious about this business of whether they have to pay the HST on May 1—that is, ahead of the July 1 implementation date. There seems to be confusion in their minds having to do with this business of pre-paying memberships and subscription dues and event tickets for future events—sporting events, cultural events and the like. Minister, what are the transition rules about early payment for future events and expenses?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to thank my colleague for the question. Just so that everyone knows, if you purchase a good or a service before July 1, you will be paying the current sales taxes, the GST and the PST, if applicable. If you purchase a good or a service after June 30, then it will be the HST rule; there will just be one sales tax in the province of Ontario. But starting on May 1, if you purchase or invoice for a good or a service that will be used after July 1—you actually get to use it after July 1—then you'll pay the HST to ensure that the people who acquire something in July or after are treated exactly the same.

This transition rule is the same rule that will apply in British Columbia. It's the same rule that was applied when the HST came into Atlantic Canada and is two months shorter than when the federal government brought in the GST.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. David Zimmer: Yesterday's Toronto Star ran an article which outlined a number of concerns that businesses have about the transitional rules and increased costs for supplies and equipment. I know that the ministry has held a lot of information sessions. There are copies of transitional rules out there and various postings on websites. But there are still a lot of organizations and

businesses, a lot of them in Willowdale, that have concerns about the HST implementation.

Minister, quite specifically, what are you doing to help and to ensure that business is ready for the HST and that the transitional rules are widely understood by business?

Hon. John Wilkinson: The first thing we did was post these transitional rules in October of last year. We passed the legislation in this House in December.

What we've been doing is reaching out to business. I've been able to criss-cross Ontario. I've been to over 90 events and spoken to over 13,000 business stakeholders myself. I can tell you that some 1.3 million Ontarians have already gone to our website, www.ontario.ca/taxchange, where there is an accurate portrayal of what the current and new rules are. We encourage people to do that.

I know that the federal government, which will be solely responsible for the HST after July 1—the Canada Revenue Agency has been proactively calling out, particularly to rural businesses: some 80,000 calls to business owners. As well, small businesses are going to receive all of their input tax credits now at 13%. We're cutting the taxes for small business from—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

PEDIATRIC FORENSIC PATHOLOGY INQUIRY

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: My question is to the Premier. In 2008, Justice Goudge released his final report on pediatric forensic pathology. Public confidence was shattered, Premier. The Attorney General promised to create a legal review team to examine over 142 criminal convictions from shaken-baby death cases resulting from Dr. Charles Smith's flawed reports.

More than a year later, there have been no answers. Premier, the Attorney General promised justice. This delay creates injustice. Why isn't the review of these shaken-baby death cases a priority with your Attorney General?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Thank you very much for the question. It is a very important question. It's also a very timely question.

Listen, we will tell you that in the justice ministries, we are very supportive of moving forward, and we are, in a very expeditious manner. We will continue to move forward clearly and carefully. Justice Goudge is very pleased with our implementation and the way we are rolling out his recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: In 2008, the Attorney General also promised to create a legal review team to advise him on a compensation process for families affected by the work of Dr. Charles Smith. But again, over a year later, a Liberal promise has amounted to nothing.

Premier, families were torn apart by Dr. Charles Smith's flawed reports. Premier, for too long, these fam-

ilies have waited. I ask for them: When will they have answers?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: The families are already getting answers, and the member across the way knows that.

We're implementing the recommendations of the Goudge inquiry. We're doing that in a very proactive but expeditious way. We will continue to do that.

I am proud of the changes we've made to the chief coroner's office. I am very proud of the changes we've made with regard to death investigation and oversight. I am very proud of those recommendations that we've put in place to develop a system so that history will not repeat itself.

He should be very proud, as we move forward, that the government of Ontario has listened carefully not only to the people of Ontario but also to Justice Goudge.

TAXATION

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Premier. The transition to the McGuinty Liberals' HST starts this Saturday, May 1. Businesses are suggesting that people prepay to save the HST.

Hon. John Gerretsen: We just answered that one, Michael.

Mr. Michael Prue: No, no. They are suggesting that you can save 8% on gym memberships. They are suggesting that you can save 8% on a new bicycle. They are suggesting that you can save 8% on a summer vacation flight.

If the Premier thinks that businesses will pass on all their savings to consumers, as he has said in this place many times, will he advise consumers to ignore this "buy now" message?

1120

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Revenue.

Hon. John Wilkinson: I have said in this House many times that, because of the transition rules, there is an opportunity for consumers to purchase prior to April 30 events that they'll consume after July 1, and they'll be able not to have to pay an extra 8%. We've said to people that it's important that you understand those rules and that you can beat the tax.

I say, as the taxman of the province of Ontario, we have set out one set of rules, and they're very clear. If businesses want to use that as a reason to accelerate their sales, we welcome that, but again, for those businesses it's April 30. After May 1, if you're selling something and invoicing something for your customer and it falls after July 1, then the HST rules and the tax will be payable to the federal government after July 1.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: The real issue here is that the businesses are not likely to refund or reduce their prices by the 8% you have suggested in the past because they can't. Come July 1, people will see 8% tacked on to everything from the gas pumps to monthly Internet fees.

This government has gone to great lengths to stop people from knowing how much the HST is going to cost

them. They've refused questions and have blocked freedom-of-information requests. Now the HST is nearly here—coming Saturday. Will this minister finally tell Ontario families how much the HST will cost them on big ticket items like gasoline?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I never heard from the members opposite the mention of the word “jobs.” The reason we're doing this is that we need to have jobs in this province. How many times have we heard the members say, “You need to spend more money”? Well, that comes from taxes. Taxes come from people who have a job and from businesses that are making a profit.

Coming out of this great recession, the most important thing we can do is have a great recovery. That's why we've decided to harmonize our sales tax, something that governments in the past have not been able to do. I want to thank the federal government, because they have worked in partnership with us to ensure that Ontario will be even more competitive than it is today, generating the jobs, the wealth and the taxes that pay for the public services we value so much. It's why it's important for businesses to get ready for the HST, to understand those transition rules and to ensure that consumers understand what those rules are. We'll continue to work our very hardest to make—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION

Mr. Jeff Leal: My question this morning is to the Minister of Transportation. My community of Peterborough is a vibrant mix of skilled labourers, farmers, university students and young families. They rely on the province's network of roads to travel, do business or visit family and friends in the GTA. Many of my constituents are looking for a faster way to get through Durham region and into Toronto.

Last January, the previous Minister of Transportation announced the government was building an extension of Highway 407 from Pickering to Clarington. The Highway 407 extension would provide a faster and easier option for my constituents to get through the Durham region and into Toronto. Would the minister please provide an update on the status of the Highway 407 project?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you to the champion for Peterborough for his question.

We do understand that it's important to have a strong network of highways and roads in place, and we know it's important that we relieve the congestion in the Durham area. That's why we're moving ahead with the 407 east extension.

Here's where we are: Last August, the Ministry of Transportation completed the environmental assessment for this project and submitted it to the Ministry of the Environment. The Ministry of the Environment is looking at that, reviewing the EA. Once the EA is approved and the necessary property is purchased, we'll begin construction of the highway.

MTO is continuing to do some of the other support work that needs to be in place, including archaeological investigations, mitigations for species at risk and utility relocations.

I want to thank the member for Peterborough for his advocacy on this. This will make a huge difference to the congestion in the eastern part of the region.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?
Interjections.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I know the member from Durham is interested in this project, too.

I know my constituents will look forward to hearing more about the 407 extension as it moves forward.

Highway 7 is another important road for many people of Peterborough. It provides a direct connection between the Peterborough region and other municipalities. I'm happy to say that since we've been in government, much has been done to improve highway conditions and safety on this very busy highway.

With the arrival of spring, many of my constituents are anticipating the beginning of the construction season and want to know if any further improvements are planned to Highway 7 this year.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, can you please tell us what projects will be going ahead in my riding of Peterborough this summer?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I do look forward to updating the member on the 407 as that work progresses.

We've already done a lot of work on Highway 7, as the member said. In 2006, we invested \$1.2 million for intersection improvements at Parkhill Road, and we have also invested \$7.2 million for resurfacing, intersection improvements and passing lanes from Fowlers Corners west to Omemee. Last year, we invested \$18.4 million for the resurfacing and the addition of a left-turn lane from Drummond Line to Peterborough. We're going to continue to maintain.

This year, we're going to continue our \$16.7-million expansion project from Highway 28 to Drummond Line. We're currently widening Highway 7 east of Peterborough from two to five lanes; that's four through lanes and one centre left-turn lane, as well as undertaking entrance improvements and resurfacing.

The other issue here is, this creates 112 jobs, which is also important for the community. We look forward to that continuing work.

CORONER'S INQUESTS

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: My question is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. It has been more than 18 months since the release of the Goudge inquiry, and to avoid the tragedies that occurred after Dr. Smith's cruel and flawed reports, you promised to strengthen oversight at Ontario's coroner's office. One section of Bill 115, the Coroners Amendment Act, created the legislative framework for this oversight. To date, it is the only section of the bill that is yet to be proclaimed.

You promised in this House that Bill 115 would help prevent the injustices that occurred in the past—and you

know how serious they were. Minister, why are you breaking your promise to Ontario families on this very important issue?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: The fact of the matter is that nothing can be farther from the truth. We are moving on the recommendations that were recommended by Justice Goudge. We're moving very expeditiously. We are moving to ensure that the system we have in place will protect against ever having to repeat the history of the past. The recommendations that Justice Goudge provided us with are an excellent framework to move forward. The member knows full well that we are moving forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Minister, you say that accountability and transparency are important within the coroner's office; however, you haven't even created a timeline for the death investigation oversight council. And despite heated opposition, despite my amendments at committee that were ignored, you foolishly removed ministerial oversight. As a result, there is absolutely no oversight mechanism in place, as we stand, at the Ontario coroner's office. The Farlow family, whom I've met a number of times—and they've been to my office—lost their baby, Annie, and they're trying to access an oversight system at the Ontario coroner's office. There is no oversight, so they have come to our office for assistance.

Minister, why have you weakened a process of accountability that you promised to strengthen with Bill 115?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I guess it's all in interpretation, because we've made it stronger. We don't believe that there should be political interference. We believe that the experts should be the ones who decide whether or not an inquest is held. When section 22 was a part of the legislation, it was never used by any government in the province of Ontario. They can yell and scream and do all—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The honourable member just asked the question. He knows if he's not satisfied—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): If you're not satisfied with the answer, you can call for a late show.

Minister?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: They can yell and scream all they want. The fact of the matter is, all the legislative recommendations that Justice Goudge recommended in his report will be implemented. We have committed to that. We will not allow for political interference in the calling of an inquest. We think that's wrong. Previous Tory governments—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

1130

PHARMACISTS

Mr. Howard Hampton: My question is for the Minister of Health. Many of the drugstores in my con-

stituency of Kenora-Rainy River are small, independent pharmacies. In many cases, there is one pharmacy for the community. They serve not only the local community but the surrounding rural area and First Nations.

For example, the independent pharmacies in Red Lake, Emo and Rainy River, if they were forced to close, would have literally thousands of people having to travel, in some cases, 100 kilometres or more to the next pharmacy. They are concerned that they may have to close, because they see your scheme as a one-size-fits-all strategy that ignores communities in northern Ontario. Why are you ignoring these communities and putting their pharmacies at risk of closure?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'd like to thank the member opposite for the question, because it really gives me an opportunity to address this myth that's out there in the community.

We are absolutely committed to supporting those pharmacies in small towns and underserved communities. We are proposing that we increase the dispensing fee for those pharmacists by up to \$4. Pharmacists across the province will have an increase in their dispensing fees. I'm talking about the fees that we as a government pay for people on the Ontario drug benefit plan.

In those small communities, because we value the work they do, we want to make sure that they remain viable. We will increase the dispensing fees in those communities.

These reforms are important for all—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Howard Hampton: That's the McGuinty government's version of events. I want to read to you a letter from the young woman who owns the pharmacy in Rainy River. She is the only pharmacist. She doesn't have other pharmacists on staff. She says, "our dispensing fee has only been increased by 54 cents over the past 20 years," that "we are being reimbursed a mere \$7 for filling prescriptions while the actual cost to the pharmacy is almost \$14," and that "the number of prescriptions being filled per year is growing much faster...." She says that adding \$3 or \$4 to the prescription fee isn't going to make up for the money that her pharmacy will lose. She then goes on to say that she has done the numbers and she may be forced to close. She asks what happens to the 4,000 people in that community and surrounding area when they don't have her to do the work for them.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: This, of course, is a concern I have heard from members of my own caucus who are speaking to pharmacists in their communities in rural areas. As I said, it is an issue that we are determined to address appropriately.

But I have to ask, does the NDP support reducing the prices of drugs for vulnerable people in this province? Are you opposed to the changes that we are making that will bring down the prices of drugs for people who are living on the edge?

Let me quote Susan Eng. She's the vice-president of advocacy for CARP, the Canadian Association of Retired

Persons: "Lowering the cost of ... prescription drugs is a major priority for our members, regardless of whether they are covered by the Ontario government, private drug plans or paid out of their own pockets. They and all Ontarians will benefit from the direct savings in drug costs and the redirection of the public savings"—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

TOURISM AND CULTURE

Mrs. Liz Sandals: My question is for the Minister of Tourism and Culture. In the past week, I've noticed many media outlets have reported on the introduction of Culture Days in Ontario. I understand from the reports that Culture Days is a national movement to strengthen grassroots engagement across the country. This movement is the first of its kind in Canada and it will be the largest-ever collective public participation campaign undertaken by the arts and cultural community in Canada. It will help increase awareness and promote greater participation in the cultural industry.

Minister, what can I tell the cultural groups in Guelph that our government is doing to increase awareness and promote greater participation in the cultural industry?

Hon. Michael Chan: I want to thank my colleague from the city of Guelph for the question. Novelist Ayn Rand once famously wrote, "A culture is made, or destroyed, by its articulate voices." Ontario's articulate voices are the Ontario task force on Culture Days and the Ontario Arts Council. They represent the thousands of voices in the cultural industry across the province.

The task force will be developing and promoting Culture Days. They will also represent Ontario on the national stage. The Ontario Arts Council, an agency of our government, is playing an important advisory role. The Ontario task force on Culture Days is embarking on a new journey that will celebrate the arts and increase participation.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Thank you very much, Minister. We know that Ontario does have an important role to play in this national effort. Ontario's participation in Culture Days will increase visitors to our cultural attractions and tourism destinations. In fact, I've been fortunate that three Guelph and area cultural groups recently received grants from your ministry to support tourism.

Quebec has been very successful in this venture. Culture Days started in Quebec in 1997 as Journées de la culture. Last year, more than 300,000 individuals participated in activities in 331 cities and towns throughout Quebec. Speaker, through you to the Minister of Tourism and Culture: What specifically is our government doing to lend support to culture and Culture Days in Ontario?

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you again for the question. Our investments in the Ontario Arts Council and the Ontario Trillium Foundation help increase participation in the arts sector across Ontario. These investments make

a difference in every corner of this province, including the city of Guelph.

The Ontario Arts Council supports artists and arts organizations. Their annual budget is almost \$60 million, an increase of 140% since 2003. In 2009, the Ontario Arts Council supported over 1,400 individual artists and over 1,000 organizations in 200 communities across Ontario. The Ontario Trillium Foundation also supports non-profit organizations in the arts and culture. We are investing \$120 million this year in the Ontario Trillium Foundation. These investments enrich the arts in communities all across Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1137 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I would like to introduce to you Ms. Deborah Frame. Deborah is a long-time family friend of the Kerr family and she's joining us today for George Kerr's tribute.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: In the east members' gallery, we have some members of the Canadian Association of Wound Care. They are Emily Wills, Chris Prashad, Alexis Reid, Amanda Larose, Sabrina Brummell, Charles Hain, Gail Woodbury, Gary Sibbald, Mariam Botros, Patricia Coutts, Tiffany Ing and Todd Saulnier.

Mr. Rick Johnson: I have a number of concerned citizens from my area who will be here this afternoon, if they're not here yet: Anne Johnson, Cindy Sutch, Ryan Sutch, Irene Sutch, Jessie Blight, Ralph Ruffo, Mary Cowling, Murray Cowling, Warren Cowling, John Hair, Anthony Peace, Dave Bridges, Sarah Miller, Riley Miller, Margaret Everding, Margo Ratsep, Margret Mayer, Oliver Mayer, Dave Watson, and reporters Barb McCechran and Paul Rellinger.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It is my profound pleasure to be able to introduce to this chamber two of my constituents who have travelled from North Gore today, Gary Chandler and Dan Scharf. They're up there looking at us and waving, and they're doing a great job by visiting.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CANADIAN NAVY

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I rise today to commemorate the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the Canadian Navy. I want to recognize the heroic group of men and women who have served our great country at sea as we celebrate this monumental anniversary.

The Canadian Navy was born when the Canadian Parliament passed the Naval Service Act, which came into effect on May 4, 1910. Officially known as the

Naval Service Act of Canada, this new entity created a permanent volunteer force that included a reserve. In its early years, our Canadian Navy featured one single cruiser patrolling the waters of the west and east coasts. The British cruiser HMS Rainbow was the first ship commissioned into the Canadian Navy, on November 7, 1910. By the end of the Battle of the Atlantic during the Second World War, the Canadian Navy had grown to be the primary navy in the northwest sector of the Atlantic Ocean.

The individuals who served and died for our country at sea must be remembered, not just today but every day. They fought for our country so that we could enjoy our democracy and live with the freedom and liberties that we do today. For that, I salute the members of our navy, past and present, and say thank you.

GOLDMAN SACHS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I wonder which senior government official was monitoring Goldman Sachs's disgraceful display yesterday in Washington. Was anyone awake? Anyone care? Did anyone hear Goldman Sachs betting against its own clients' investments, getting people into housing as it was banking on the market collapsing? These are the Premier's consultants.

Does anyone share the outrage of senators—Democrats and Republicans—at how ruthless, unethical banks like Goldman Sachs fixed the odds in their favour no matter whom they hurt? These are the people Dalton McGuinty hired to advise him on privatization.

I don't know about you, Mr. Speaker, but the tens of thousands of Ontarians who lost their jobs thanks to banks like Goldman Sachs deserve better—and better from this government, which should monitor the astonishing goings-on in Washington and act on them like Ontarians expect them to act by sacking Goldman Sachs. Anything else is a dereliction of duty.

GOOD COMPANIONS SENIORS' CENTRE

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: It is my great pleasure today to talk about the Good Companions Seniors' Centre in my riding of Ottawa Centre. It is located on Albert Street, and this year, Good Companions will be celebrating its 55th year of providing service for our seniors in the great city of Ottawa.

It is an incredibly bright place to visit. I often go to the Good Companions centre to just talk to seniors, and to serve them tea and lunch once in a while. It's incredible to see how engaged and active the seniors are at the Good Companions centre. It's full of volunteers who provide services. They have things like fitness and dance classes, Spanish lessons, cards, bingo, crafts, and informative sessions on health and wellness that go on on a daily basis.

I just want to congratulate them for the great service they are providing to our seniors in the Ottawa area and

the good work they do. Special thanks to all the volunteers who are involved at the Good Companions centre. Thanks to the president of the board, Rock Falardeau, and his board for the good work they do; to the executive director, Louise Martin; and to all the staff at the Good Companions Seniors' Centre for their dedication to our seniors and the service they give to them. Congratulations on your 55th anniversary.

GARRY BACHMAN

Mr. John O'Toole: It's my privilege today to stand and pay tribute to my constituent Garry Bachman. He was inducted into the Ontario Masters Athletics Hall of Fame on December 5.

Listen to this: Garry competes among athletes who are over 85 years of age at shot put, discus, hammer throw, weight throw, pentathlon and javelin. Imagine that at 85. That's Participation. He received five gold medals and a bronze at the World Masters Games held in 2007. Garry is living proof that the spirit of athletic excellence is not defined by age. He describes himself as a non-conformist who follows no diet regime or training schedule. He's just a great, physically fit person. He prefers to learn from other athletes as well as reading, watching videos and, above all, getting plenty of practice.

Garry Bachman is a worthy addition to the hall of fame, and I know that members here will wish him well. More importantly, the message for young people today is, believe in yourself, do your best and stay focused on what the purpose is. I commend Garry, and I'm sure all members do as well.

1510

ONTARIO ARTISTS

Mr. Rick Johnson: I am pleased to rise in the House today to speak about a unique project that is being organized by a constituent of mine in the town of Minden.

Marc Shroetter, the curator of the Crowne Gallery, a fine art gallery and art supply shop, has been working on a unique project to support our troops in Afghanistan. Marc has enlisted local artists, as well as artists from across Canada, to paint postcards of Canadian scenes in a variety of formats—watercolours, oils, acrylics—with positive messages handwritten on the back. When Marc has collected 40 to 50 of these original works, he packages them up and sends them to our troops overseas. It provides them with a piece of home and a message of appreciation from the arts community in my riding and beyond.

I had the privilege of visiting the Crowne Gallery this past weekend and was able to see first-hand the works that have been sent in to date. Many of the paintings are representative of the beautiful lakes and hills that surround Minden and the rest of Haliburton county. This is the area of Ontario that borders on Algonquin Park. It's part of the landscape that inspired the paintings of the famous Group of Seven artists. Their influence can be seen in many of the postcards that I saw.

Imagine what it is like for one of our soldiers to be sitting on the dusty reaches of Kandahar and to be able to look at the picturesque beauty of a loon landing on one of our gorgeous Ontario waterways, seeing the brush strokes and knowing that someone back home has taken the time to brighten their day.

I want to thank the artists from Haliburton county and, indeed, from across Canada who are contributing to this wonderful project. Special thanks to Marc Shroetter, curator of the Crowne Gallery in Minden, for creating such a unique way to brighten the days of our brave soldiers so far from home.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's my pleasure to rise in the assembly today to talk about the Truth in Government Act that I have tabled and that I will be speaking about next week here in this chamber. I'm hoping each member of the assembly will support us.

It is a measure of five robust accountability ideas that we think can be done today, here in the Ontario Legislature. Those five issues are: expanding the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and its scope so that it hits every public sector body—that means that it would open it up to hospitals, which is an idea that has been put forward by the Ontario Hospital Association as well as Ontario's Information and Privacy Commissioner. We also have four other initiatives there that talk about full, proactive disclosure in all public sector bodies. That means that we would ask for full disclosure, quarterly, on websites of the following things: any contribution or grant given that's \$10,000 or more will be known to the public; any contract that is tendered, over \$10,000, would also be made available in public; all hospitality and travel expenses will be made public; and we would ask that all reclassifications of public sector jobs be made available so the public, media, third party watchdog groups and the opposition will all have an opportunity to see what's in government so we can restore truth in government.

I'm calling on all members of the Ontario Legislature to support Tim Hudak and the PC caucus's plan for truth in government.

CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF WOUND CARE

Ms. Helena Jaczek: On March 22 of this year, I had the privilege of attending a reception here at Queen's Park hosted by the Canadian Association of Wound Care, also known as the CAWC. This non-profit organization is comprised of health care professionals and stakeholders dedicated to the advancement of wound care in Canada. Their efforts include advancing professional education, supporting investments in wound management and prevention research, informing and educating the public, and empowering patients and the people who care for them.

As a physician, I can speak from first-hand experience that both education and proper care for wounds is essen-

tial if patients want to be on the steady road to recovery. Wounds from surgery, pressure ulcers and bedsores can often lead to infection and amputation if they are not properly cared for. Over two million Ontarians are seriously impacted by their wounds, at a cost of over \$1.5 billion to our health care system.

I would like to recognize the work of the volunteers, patients and health care professionals at the CAWC. Their tireless work in providing training to hospitals, long-term-care facilities and to home care providers is helping to reduce the incidence and impact of wounds, therefore relieving some of the burden from our health care system.

I ask this House to recognize the work of the attending members of this organization, as well as Patricia Coutts, board chair; Karen Philp, chief executive officer; and Emily Wills, government relations and communication coordinator.

MARCH OF DIMES

Mr. Glen R. Murray: I would like to welcome to the Legislature, from the March of Dimes organization, up to my left, Jerry Lucas, Gail Mores, Brent Page, Donna Mackay, Steven Christianson, Janet Macmaster and many members of the conductive education program.

I am proud to rise in the Legislature today to recognize and give my heartfelt thanks to the participants, families, caregivers and staff members from the March of Dimes conductive education program. Members may not know that conductive education is a unique teaching system that maximizes the independence and mobility of children and adults with neuromotor disabilities, like stroke, cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis, acquired brain injuries and Parkinson's disease.

Conductive education takes advantage of the brain's neuroplasticity: the lifelong ability of the brain to re-organize neuro-pathways based on new experiences. So no matter how severe the disability, people can learn and improve when they are motivated.

Conductive education has the potential to make a significant life-changing impact on the mobility and independence of close to nine million people in North America, and is operated from the offices of our very own March of Dimes, an organization that has been helping improve the lives and livelihoods of Ontarians with disabilities for nearly 60 years. Conductive education helps individuals learn their way to greater independence.

I hope the House will join me in congratulating our guests from the March of Dimes for their commitment to inclusion and accessibility. I ask all members to support the March of Dimes' conductive education awareness day.

10 DAYS ACROSS CANADA

Mr. Jim Brownell: I rise in the House today to congratulate my good friend John Earle and his partners Frank Burrelle, Jamie Carr and Ron Piquette on their new hit movie, 10 Days Across Canada.

Over a 10-day period last September, four filmmakers from Cornwall, Ontario, managed to travel through 10 provinces and three territories. During their journey, they met celebrities and hundreds of everyday Canadians, from dogsledders in the north to CFL players in the west and First Nations leaders in the east. Their goal was to find out what it means to be a Canadian.

The film includes appearances by celebrities such as astronaut Marc Garneau; actresses Geri Hall from *This Hour Has 22 Minutes* and Sheila McCarthy from *Little Mosque on the Prairie*; former Toronto Maple Leafs captain Doug Gilmour; and musical artist Natalie MacMaster, to name a few. There is also a very special appearance by our very own Premier of Ontario, the Honourable Dalton McGuinty.

The film debuted at Galaxy Cinemas in Cornwall on April 7, and it will make its national debut in 20 Cineplex theatres across Canada tonight, and right here in Toronto at the Varsity Cineplex in the Manulife Centre at 55 Bloor Street West.

This is the fourth film from Frank Burrelle and John Earle of FishRizzo Productions. Previously, the two have collaborated on 86400, *Treasures of the Lost Villages* and *Submerged*.

I would like to invite all my colleagues here in the Legislature to make sure they see 10 Days Across Canada, as it supports our local filmmakers in the province of Ontario and, of course, in my riding of Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Mr. Michael Prue: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Your committee begs to report the following bills without amendment:

Bill Pr29, An Act to revive 962 Bloor Street West Limited.

Bill Pr30, An Act to revive the Durham Region Classic Mustang Club.

Bill Pr31, An Act to revive Deepa Gas Limited.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed. Minister?

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice for ballot item 21 be waived.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Motions? Minister without portfolio.

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 98(b), the following change be made to the ballot list for private members' public business: Mrs. Sandals and Mr. Oraziatti exchange places in order of precedence such that Mrs. Sandals assumes ballot item number 20 and Mr. Oraziatti assumes ballot item number 24; and that, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), the requirement for notice be waived with respect to ballot item number 20.

1520

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

GEORGE KERR

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I believe we have unanimous consent that up to five minutes be allotted to each party to speak in remembrance of the late George Kerr.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'm delighted to be able to speak about George Kerr, who was a good friend of many of us and who used to serve in this Legislature. The member sitting across from me, Norm Sterling, remembers George very well, as a colleague in cabinet and in the government caucus in the Progressive Conservative Party, and I remember him as a member of the opposition at the time.

I guess there are many things that you would want to say about George Kerr. You could go on for 15 or 20 minutes. He always reminded a lot of people of being the sheriff when he arrived: He was a tall, distinguished-looking individual with a bit of a stern manner. But of course, if you knew him, he had an excellent sense of humour and he fit the title of Solicitor General when he was there.

Something interesting about George that a lot of people don't know—perhaps if they didn't know him personally and don't know the history of the province—is that he was, to my recollection, the first environment minister in the province of Ontario. He served under two different Premiers, Premier Robarts and Premier Davis, and was well-liked by his colleagues. I know that. But he also did a lot of great committee work. A lot of people think that they remember George as a cabinet minister,

but before he got into cabinet, and subsequent to that, he was a great asset to the Progressive Conservative government of the day for the committee work that he did.

Some of us come from the municipal field, and he came from the municipal field. We probably all have something in common somewhere along the way. I remember, in 1971, moving at St. Catharines city council that we secede from the Regional Municipality of Niagara, which will be celebrating its 40th anniversary. I'll be at the dinner when they do so, commending them of course. George did not want Burlington to be part of Hamilton-Wentworth. He was very successful: He managed to persuade Premier Davis and others. Municipal Affairs Minister Darcy McKeough was around at that time, and Darcy had a lot to say about these things. George managed to persuade them that, indeed, he should be able to keep Burlington out of the clutches of Hamilton-Wentworth, and today it has been that case as part of Halton.

He was first elected as a member for Halton in 1963, I believe, and then it became Halton West, and as the area grew up in terms of the number of people there, he became the member for Burlington South. If you're from the Burlington area, from Halton, you would recognize him as a giant. There's one thing that was made reference to—and Joyce will probably make greater reference to this and I won't steal her thunder on it and she will probably elaborate on this. There was a great speech he made—I think it was at your nomination, Joyce, that he made that speech, or victory night, one of the two—when he was well on in age and he had many health challenges, but he still rallied the troops on that special Progressive Conservative occasion.

He was very loyal to the party, and very loyal to the Premiers that he served with, but he was a no-nonsense person. He was not the kind of person that could be bullied around easily; he had his views and they were pretty clear views. Now, Norm Sterling and I have both been Minister of the Environment at one time or another, and I remember he did something neither one of us did: He went for a swim in Burlington Bay to demonstrate, perhaps, that the water wasn't as dirty as people thought. When he got in there he may have changed his mind somewhat, but he actually got in with an old-style bathing suit, and went into the bay. It was quite an event. There was a lot of media around.

He was very focused on the environment. Remember that he lived in an area that was impacted, and in those days there may not have been as many environmental controls as we see in our society today. He had those huge booming smelters in Hamilton from Stelco and Dofasco, and the smoke—as it was called then; we call it pollution now—in those days, before a lot of the environmental controls were put on, was pretty pronounced. George recognized that we had to improve a lot of things, but he recognized that improvement of the quality of air and water was very important.

As a personality, he was extremely well-liked in his riding. He was elected over and over again. Anybody

who was challenging him in an election recognized that it was very much an uphill battle, not just because Burlington had a significant history of electing Progressive Conservatives, but because George himself was a man who got along with everybody. He truly was an individual who, as Rudyard Kipling said, could walk with kings and keep the common touch.

We send our condolences to the family. Even though he passed on a few years ago now, I think the family can be justifiably proud of him. We thank them for allowing him to be with us for as many years as he was, about 21.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: On behalf of Andrea Horwath and the New Democrats, I'd like to extend our thoughts to the family. Mr. Kerr, who was a member of this assembly from 1963 to 1985, exemplified what politics is all about. It's what Tip O'Neill said; it's local. You may think that you walk into this place and you walk with kings and have great ideas and aspirations, but at the end of the day it's the people back home that brought you here. This is something that Mr. Kerr understood from a very early time.

Now, I want to say I didn't serve here—Mr. Kerr left in 1985; I got here in 1990—but who could grow up in the 1970s—never mind, I was grown up by then. But who could go through the 1970s—I wish I grew up in the 1970s—and pay attention to Ontario politics and not know the name of George Kerr? He was one of those people who was a little bit bigger than life because he marched to his own drummer. He was a proud Conservative who served under various Premiers in the Conservative Party here when it was government, but he understood that he had certain things that he wanted to do and that at the end of the day independence is not a bad thing as long as it's measured within the confines of the political party. This is something that I understood very early on, because I remember being a young adult at that time in the 1970s, when the first Minister of the Environment to be appointed in Ontario was George Kerr, and it was fitting because he moved the envelope forward beyond where it was at the time and started setting up some of the debates that we're having today in regards to issues around water, air and emissions that go on.

From 1963 to 1985 is a long time in politics. Obviously, along that time his family, his wife and kids, three children that they had together, paid the price for him to be here. There are very few people who are fortunate enough to serve in this place over 20 years, and obviously 22 years in the Legislature means to say that often he was not there for his children when they needed him at particular events or issues going on in the family. We have all suffered that in this Legislature, as we well know. Often his wife was left alone to deal with some of the issues that had to be dealt with. To his family we say, thank you for lending us your father, not just to the Legislature but to Ontario, to the politics of Ontario and making this province a much better place.

George, as I said at the beginning, sort of lived to his own drummer and he sort of set something up. He may not have been the first one, but he's the one that I first

remember. I don't remember the details to this, so I may be corrected by other members of the assembly, but I remember that when he was Solicitor General there was an issue about impropriety. I don't remember what it was all about. George Kerr did what ministers of the crown should do, and George Kerr said, "I will step aside and allow an investigation to happen," and he went around to make sure that an investigation did take place. Eventually his name was cleared because it turned out there was no impropriety, but he understood that, as a minister of the crown, ultimately he had the responsibility to do the right thing. As I remember it, he was one of the first, if not the first, elected official in cabinet to have done that that I can remember. I don't know if it happened prior, but I can tell you that in my early memory he was one of the first. He went back and served again as Solicitor General and served in a number of other posts in the Conservative government, and understood that at the end of the day, the buck stops here. I think that's something that we should all remember.

So to his family, to his friends, and to Deborah Frame, who is here, who grew up with him and knew him as a personal friend over the years, certainly a person of memory, a person of integrity and a person who served this Legislature and the province for a long time and left one real big legacy to the people of Ontario—we say to George Kerr: Thank you and God bless.

1530

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I am going to be sharing my time with the member from Mississippi Mills.

Today, I stand here with all of you to remember the life of George Kerr. In Mr. Kerr's own words in his maiden day speech, he said, "It's with a feeling of privilege and some pride that I am able, as a new member, to speak for the first time in this assembly." We all know what that feels like. To George, it meant the world. He was passionate about it.

Mr. Kerr served the residents of Burlington South from 1963 to 1985. That's an era that we will never see again. Mr. Kerr had a tremendous record of accomplishments. These were times when visionary and creative leaders like George Kerr could trail-blaze, and trail-blaze he did. He was the first-ever environment minister not only here in Ontario, but in Canada. In addition, he served as Minister of Colleges and Universities, the Provincial Secretary for Justice—I have the Bible he swore on when he became the minister that day—and also as Solicitor General.

Some may say that George Kerr is best remembered for his Ministry of the Environment tenure. I can tell you that his constituents remember George Kerr best for what he did for them, each individual person in Burlington. George Kerr always had time for his constituents, and there wasn't anything you couldn't talk to him about. George was just a great listener. He was a tremendous advocate for our community. Time doesn't allow me to go through the long list of examples, but I will give you a couple.

Mr. Kerr successfully resisted the inclusion of Burlington, as Minister Bradley said, in the formation of

the Hamilton-Wentworth regional government. As great a city as Hamilton is, that accomplishment was a great piece of influence that led to the success that Burlington is today.

In 1975, Mr. Kerr infamously wore that old-fashioned, horizontally striped bathing suit with the shoulder straps and all—if I remember the picture, I think he may even have had one of those rubber caps on—and he dove into Burlington Bay for a swim. The swim was as a result of a pledge he had made, and he was a man of his word. He had made that pledge five years earlier. He had said that the bay would be clean enough to swim in in five years, and although he publicly admitted afterwards that the bay wasn't clean enough to swim in, if you knew George Kerr, you knew he wasn't the type of person to go back on his word. So, clean or not, he went in for his swim.

Aside from all his accomplishments as an MPP, George was a kind and compassionate man. He and Mim were a loving couple, and they were inseparable.

The happy couple had three children who Mr. Kerr involved in all his campaigns. Campaigning was in George's blood. Just a couple of months before he passed, it was a thrill to have him show up on a cold February morning at one of my by-election rallies in 2007. He then followed me to make visits to long-term-care homes and spoke passionately about what he knew government should be.

I can still see him slouched in his chair with his ever-present pipe in his mouth, the smoke circling around his head, and his dog nearby.

He served with honour and integrity, and it was my great privilege to call George Kerr my MPP, but also my friend.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I, like Mr. Bradley, was a member here in 1977 when George Kerr was a member here, and of course he was a member until 1985.

I got to know George quite well. He was a cabinet minister, a party man, but, as Mr. Bisson has said, he had an individuality about him. He was almost impish at times in terms of what he might do or might say.

One story I want to tell you was when he was Minister of the Environment; I was told this story about six or seven years after it happened in 1977. In the 1977 election, as Jim and I would remember better than others, the Wabigoon River in northern Ontario was a big issue. There was the discovery of significant mercury poisoning in that river. George Kerr was the environment minister at that time, and I was told this story by his former deputy, who became my deputy in 1983.

George was approached by the press about this mercury in the Wabigoon River. George said to the press, "Don't worry about the mercury. It's going to flush out in 21 weeks." His deputy minister came to him after he made this statement to the press and said, "Mr. Minister, where did you get this information that the mercury is going to be flushed out of the river in 21 weeks?" George said to his deputy minister, totally disregarding whether or not it would be flushed out, "Well, if I had said it was going to be flushed out in one or two years, they would never have believed me."

He was a real character in terms of what he did, but he absolutely loved his life here, loved what he was doing and loved the people. When his daughter, Margot, was asked about him when he passed away in 2007, she said, "He treated everyone equally and listened to people. He always had time for anybody. We could have a dog catcher and the Premier over for dinner the same night, and he wouldn't have thought there was any difference."

Mayor Cam Jackson, who succeeded him as MPP for Burlington, said that George Kerr thought about people first and politics second, and it's in that vein that I want to talk about the problem he ran into in August 1978, when he ultimately asked to step down as Solicitor General.

During that period of time, as you may remember, or as people who were involved in politics may remember, federal minister John Munro was embroiled in a tremendous publicity-oriented scandal where he had actually phoned a judge to give a character reference with regard to somebody who was appearing in front of that judge. The papers were full of it at that time.

What happened to George Kerr was that he had a constituent come to his office. This was a member of a visible minority who was suffering from mental illness and who didn't have any kind of influence in the Progressive Conservative Party and didn't have a great influence in George's community or whatever. But the kind of guy that George was, he wanted to help this particular individual—he was charged with an offence; I believe driving while under suspension.

Even though he was Solicitor General and should never have done it, George picked up the phone and phoned the Milton courthouse asking to speak to the prosecuting attorney, to warn him about the fact that this particular individual had talked about taking his own life and George was very, very concerned for him.

Unfortunately, the request to find the crown attorney went over the loudspeaker, someone picked it up and the news got out that George had called the prosecuting attorney. Along with the scandal that was taking place with regard to John Munro calling a judge, the stories got mixed and the press was relentless, as was the opposition at that time.

1540

I was also involved in the following inquiry that took place. It was kind of an odd inquiry. I don't think we've had one ever since. It was actually a parliamentary inquiry, in camera, headed up by Arthur Maloney, who was then the Ombudsman. I was inside the room as a member of our caucus dealing with that inquiry. I never felt so sorry. I guess I learned about how mean this process can be to a politician who, in my view, should have been admired for what he did for somebody who was struggling tremendously in his community. He went to bat for that particular individual.

His resignation coincided with a Progressive Conservative annual meeting that was taking place here in Toronto. When George Kerr was introduced, I had never heard such a standing ovation and cheering. It went on

for 20 minutes for George Kerr. That's how much he was loved by the party and respected by the people.

I can only say that, although those of us who have practised law, as I have, and George, who practised law—maybe he should have known better, but I don't think that I have witnessed in my almost 33 years here in the Legislature any resignation in which anybody, as a cabinet minister, could have walked away more proud than George Kerr did in this situation.

He was one of my heroes and remains one of my heroes, that he could put aside all of his political ambitions to help out a constituent who was in deep trouble. He's a man to be admired. I loved him very much, and we thank his family for his contribution to this Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all members who took part in the tribute to Mr. Kerr. I will ensure, on behalf of all members of the House, that transcripts of the Hansard and a DVD of today's proceedings are forwarded to the family.

NATIONAL DAY OF MOURNING

Hon. Gerry Phillips: Mr. Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent that up to five minutes be allocated to each party to speak on the National Day of Mourning.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister of Labour.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: Today is a significant day here in Ontario and across Canada. Today is the National Day of Mourning.

On this day, we all remember. We pay our respects to the workers who have been killed, who have been injured, or who suffer illness as a result of work-related incidents. We honour the families who also have been deeply affected. It's also a day for us to reflect on ways to prevent these tragedies so no other worker or family suffers again.

As Minister of Labour and as the father of twin boys who will no doubt one day enter the workforce, it's my personal pledge to make sure that this government is doing all it can to make Ontario's workplaces healthier and safer.

Across Canada, hundreds of workers die from work-related incidents and illnesses every single year, and thousands of others are injured on the job. Many must take time off work to recover. Others are so seriously injured that they are never, ever able to return to work again. The human toll of these workplace tragedies is enormous.

Yes, there are risks and hazards in most of our workplaces, but the reality is that the vast majority of these incidents could have been prevented. It's our job to minimize those risks and make sure that every worker returns home safely to their family at the end of each working day. That's why our government has a Safe At Work Ontario strategy and why we've launched an expert review of our health and safety system, doing a

comprehensive review of occupational health and safety, both enforcement and prevention, in the province of Ontario. We're working hard. We're working hard to prevent workplace incidents on a daily basis. We're targeting young and new workers. We're cracking down on workplace violence and harassment. We're conducting safety blitzes across the province in all workplaces: at mines, construction sites, industrial shops, retail and warehouses.

This day and these tragic incidents remind us that we must never, ever be complacent when it comes to worker safety. We all must play a crucial role in preventing workplace incidents from happening. When I say "we," I mean all of us: government, safety organizations, labour organizations, employers, workers—everyone. By working together, we can make Ontario a safer place for our workers.

Today, people and organizations across this country will mark the National Day of Mourning in their own way with vigils, services and candlelight ceremonies. I know that here, in the city of Toronto, the CN Tower will be lit in yellow as the day of mourning colour for hope. Many flags will be flown at half mast. I see that many here today are wearing black and yellow ribbons in honour of the National Day of Mourning, the black representing our mourning and, as I mentioned, the yellow representing the hope we have for a brighter future. Together we're working to ensure a bright future for the thousands of workers in this province and for their loved ones.

In a few moments we'll observe a moment of silence to remember all those who have suffered as a result of a workplace incident. I encourage everyone to take this opportunity to think about the many workers and families who have been affected by work-related incidents. Let us pay our respects and honour their memories. Let us also reaffirm our commitment, our determination, to prevent workplace deaths, injuries and illnesses before they occur.

This morning I had an opportunity to stand hand in hand with injured workers; with advocacy groups like Threads of Life and IWAC; with employers and labour and workers. We all must stand together to ensure that all our brothers and sisters, our mothers and fathers, our uncles and aunts, our family members, our loved ones come home safe and sound at the end of the day.

Mr. John O'Toole: I rise today on behalf of our leader, Tim Hudak, and the official opposition on the national workers' day of mourning. The theme this year is remembering lives lost and injured in the workplace. In 2008, the most recent year for which statistics are available, 1,036 Canadians lost their lives in the workplace. That is almost three deaths each day, not counting those with serious injuries.

Today we honour each of the lives lost. We extend our condolences to the families, friends, co-workers and community leaders, and we mourn their loss along with their families, whether it's a father, a mother, a brother, a sister—but a child would be the worst. We also recognize the tragic loss of injuries and illness in other workplaces.

At noon today in Durham region, hundreds gathered at the workers' day of mourning monument at Oshawa City Hall. This ceremony included participation by Mayor John Gray of Oshawa and my colleagues the member from Whitby—Oshawa, Christine Elliott, and the member from Oshawa, Jerry Ouellette.

William Stratton is chair of Durham Region Labour Council day of mourning committee, and Jim Freeman is president of the labour council in Durham. I know that most community leaders from across Durham region were in attendance. Similar ceremonies were taking place throughout our province, our country and indeed in 80 countries around the world.

The Ontario Nurses' Association is among the organizations that pay tribute to their colleagues who have lost their lives or were injured on the job: nurses such as Heather Taylor, Tecla Lin, Nelia Laroza and Lori Dupont. These nurses died at work or from infectious diseases acquired while caring for others.

1550

I might say that I met with members of the Dupont family in the course of preparing my private member's bill to honour the courage and sacrifice the family has made.

In the late 1990s, Sean Kells was just 19 years old when he was killed in a tragic accident on his third day on a part-time job. In response to the tragedy, his father, Paul Kells, founded Safe Communities Canada, an organization whose intent is to educate and prevent other families from experiencing the loss and pain that results from needless deaths, especially of a child.

We must turn this day of mourning into years of action on behalf of working families across Ontario. This day of mourning is a time to renew our commitment to the prevention of occupational injury, illness or death. It is time to reaffirm our collective support for healthy workplaces from across Ontario on this national workers' day of mourning. You have our pledge.

Mr. Peter Kormos: The day of mourning is now truly a global event. Memorial activities are held in almost 100 countries. April 28 allows all Canadians and people internationally to remember, recall and regret those working people who've had to die or suffer injuries and diseases in their workplaces. We remember workers on April 28 thanks to the efforts of labour and injured worker activists to get this day established.

In 1984, the Canadian Labour Congress set this day aside to remember workers whose jobs exposed them to hazards and risks to their life and health. In 1988, an NDP resolution here in the Ontario Legislature was passed unanimously, recognizing April 28 as a provincial day of mourning. In 1991, a private members' bill sponsored by the federal NDP was passed to proclaim April 28 of each year as a national—Canadian—day of mourning. The House of Commons and many provinces and municipalities now recognize the April 28 day of mourning with a minute's silence, and many flags fly at half-mast.

It's suitable, it's appropriate, it's essential that we remember those lost and broken lives on this day, yet it isn't right to do this only once a year. This pain suffered by those who have lost family members and friends to a workplace injury should be remembered constantly, vigilantly, on every day of every year as a caution against the future abuse of human lives. While we mourn the dead, it's also essential that we continue to fight as hard as ever—harder than ever—for the living, and prevent this terrible and unnecessary toll.

Pallbearers carried 342 Ontario workers to their graves last year; 342 Ontario workers buried in this province last year as a direct result of workplace conditions. Between 1999 and 2008, work-related deaths increased by almost 50%. In 2009, there were 479 fatality claims and 253,000-plus injury and disease claims here in Ontario. In the first two months of 2010, there have been 86 deaths—in but 60 days of 2010; 86 deaths and 38,000-plus claims for work-related injuries and diseases reported to the WSIB. These fatality figures, in fact, don't reflect the true toll of occupational disease: 9% to 40% of all cancers are occupational. In Ontario, this means that between 2,200 and 9,800 workers die of cancer each year as a result of their exposures at work. In addition to the human suffering, the health care costs of these cancers are as high as \$500 million a year.

This human suffering could have been prevented if more was done to prevent injuries in the workplace. Indeed, the government has the primary role of ensuring that that happens. One important step would be to step up criminal proceedings against employers who are responsible for the deaths or serious injuries of workers.

We've had the Criminal Code amendments since 2004 enabling prosecutors to charge corporate executives, directors and managers who recklessly disregard the safety of workers. Hundreds of workers have been killed on the job and millions injured in Ontario since that law came into effect. Holding employers responsible for workplace deaths is the best way to improve workplace safety. It's as simple as this: You kill a worker, you go to jail. Yet this government refuses to take the measures needed to ensure that police and crown attorneys are sufficiently aware of these Criminal Code provisions and that they act on them in all investigations of workplace deaths. In fact, the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services refuses to meet with the Ontario Federation of Labour to explore ways to ensure that the Westray law is fully acted on.

The Ontario government should ensure that it makes full use of the Criminal Code to stop the needless and tragic killing of Ontario workers, and the Ontario government should also ensure that every worker in this province is covered by WSIB. We still have 1.3 million workers who have no WSIB coverage whatsoever, including workers in some very hazardous workplaces. If they lose their jobs as a result of injury, they don't receive workers' compensation—WSIB. They end up relying on food banks with no job, no income and no help from the McGuinty government.

The procedure is simple. If this government had the political will and the political gumption, it could guarantee within two weeks that every worker in this province had WSIB coverage, and this government, with the political will, could ensure that if you kill a worker, you go to jail. If we really respect those dead workers and those injured workers, we would commit ourselves to those two goals immediately.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd ask all members and our guests to join me as we rise to remember those killed, injured and who continue to suffer as a result of occupational disease.

The House observed a moment's silence.

Mr. Peter Kormos: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I wish to advise that in view of the time, it's only appropriate that the Conservative caucus have two hours to present their motion and for all parties to respond, so New Democrats will not be presenting any petitions.

PETITIONS

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

Mr. Joe Dickson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of Ontario has dedicated new funding of \$100 million in addition to the \$50 million already available for professional services;

"Whereas the government is increasing the dispensing fees in the public system to help properly compensate local pharmacists for their valuable contribution to community health care;

"Whereas the opposition who are against these reforms are only interested in helping the big pharmacy chain companies increase their bottom line;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To continue to increase the money that is invested in Ontario's public drug system and to ensure that a higher quality of care is delivered, particularly for families and seniors."

I will affix my signature to that.

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontarians pay more for popular generic drugs for diabetes, high blood pressure and other common health issues than patients in other jurisdictions; and

"Whereas Ontarians deserve fair prescription drug prices so that families and seniors are not charged more than those in other countries; and

"Whereas some members of the opposition have sided with large corporations to preserve the status quo rather than make prescription medications more affordable for

Ontario patients by supporting the proposed drug reforms;

1600

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That all members of the Ontario Legislature support Ontarians by passing the government's legislation to lower the cost of prescription medications."

I agree with this petition and I'm going to sign it and send it to the desk with Mitchell.

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas multiple sclerosis ... is a debilitating disease affecting a great number of people in Ontario; and

"Whereas there has been a new treatment discovery called the liberation treatment, which addresses chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency ... and that has been seen to provide relief for many MS sufferers,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario invest in research regarding this new treatment and make it available to victims of MS in Ontario as a listed procedure in a timely manner."

I agree with this petition, and will sign it and send it to the table with page Darcy.

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of Ontario has dedicated new funding of \$100 million in addition to the \$50 million already available for professional services;

"Whereas the government is increasing the dispensing fees in the public system to help properly compensate local pharmacists for their valuable contribution to community health care;

"Whereas the opposition who are against these reforms are only interested in helping the big pharmacy chain companies increase their bottom line;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To continue to increase the money that is invested in Ontario's public drug system and to ensure that a higher quality of care is delivered, particularly for families and seniors."

I agree with this petition, affix my signature, and send it to the table via page Zachery.

RECONSTRUCTIVE SURGERY

Mr. Mario Sergio: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, which reads as follows:

"Whereas to cover the cost of reconstructive surgery when a patient has had extreme weight loss after bariatric

surgery, as these surgeries are not covered under OHIP and are at present considered cosmetic;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That when patients have bariatric surgery and lose the required amount of weight and keep it off, they also have another set of health care issues that can be very costly to take care of. As these individuals lose weight, they end up with so much excess skin and fat pockets that no amount of exercise will take care of it. This excess skin and folds in the skin can cause anything from boils, cysts, skin infections and more that have to be cared for constantly in hospital emergency rooms and cared for by agencies like community care access centres. If preventative reconstructive surgeries are not approved, the constant medical care will cost the taxpayer much more money as said health issues would cost over time."

I have read the petition as I have received it, and I will affix my signature to make the House aware of this particular petition.

OPPOSITION DAY

WIND TURBINES

Mr. John Yakabuski: I want to thank and recognize members on all sides of the House for allowing us the extra time and not using all of the time for petitions today.

I move that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario calls for a moratorium on all wind farm projects until an independent, comprehensive study of the health and environmental impacts of wind farms is completed and Premier McGuinty restores the planning authority governing them to municipalities and local boards.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'm just going to remind all the members who are in the galleries today—I saw you were just about to clap and you caught yourself there—that you're allowed to observe, but as much as you may desire to participate in the process, you can't; you have to be elected and down here.

Mr. Peter Kormos: They can smile or frown.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): They can smile; they can frown.

Mr. Yakabuski moves opposition day number 3.

Debate?

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's a pleasure to introduce and also to speak to this motion today. I have many, many members of my caucus who wish to speak to it as well. Therefore, I will be limiting my own time.

When the Green Energy Act was introduced, the part of the Green Energy Act which we believed as Progressive Conservatives was total unnecessary was the stripping away of the municipalities' right to make decisions on behalf of the people who elected them to their respective offices.

Recently, the Premier has talked about how important municipal governments are and how responsible they are. They're an integral part of the governing process in the province of Ontario. We have the federal government; we have the provincial government; we have municipal governments. Why this government would feel the need to strip away those powers of municipalities in order to advance its own agenda is beyond us.

One of the things that the Minister of Energy spoke about today: that in the act, they must consult with these municipalities. Consulting with municipalities on the building of large wind farms in Ontario reminds me of the old Wild West, where, after the sheriff apprehended someone, he would say, "All right; hang him." Someone would protest and say, "Isn't he entitled to a fair trial?", to which the sheriff would reply, "Yes. That's right. Let's give him a fair trial and then hang him." That's exactly what's happening with the consultation process with regard to municipalities in the province of Ontario. Yes, they put it in the act where they have to talk to these people, but it's meaningless, because at the end of the day, they're going to make the decision that they're going to build the projects they want.

I want to talk about the fact that it's not even really happening. I spoke today to George Lawrence, who's the deputy mayor of Tiny township in the riding of Simcoe North. He told me that they were not even informed of two contracts until they were announced. Under the recent 184 contracts that were announced by the Minister of Energy, two of them were in Tiny township. They didn't know a thing about them. What kind of consultation process is that? The consultation process must go on after they're announced; that's the kind of consultation that is going on with municipalities.

I want to talk about the health issues surrounding wind turbines. I don't know. I'm not a scientist, but neither is the Minister of Energy, and he has categorically dismissed any studies that have shown that there are health effects as a result of establishing wind turbines. In fact, I heard him tell the press today, "Any studies we've looked at, we haven't agreed with." Just because you don't agree with a study doesn't mean that it's not valid. That's the way they look at studies. They don't like what it says: Apparently, it's not a very good study. We're asking this Legislature to stand today and support what we consider to be a reasonable proposition, a reasonable motion: that they stop and put a moratorium on these large wind developments until such time as these questions can be answered.

I want to know from members of this House on the opposite side how they're going to respond to this motion and to the people in their ridings, many of whom are here today, who have indicated to them and have not had any satisfactory response from them as MPPs. I want to know what the member for Prince Edward-Hastings is going to say today, if she's going to be here for the vote or if she's going to speak to it. I want to know what the member for Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock is going to say today, because I know that there are people from Manvers

township here today who have expressed strong concerns about these wind farms. I want to know what the member for Essex and the member for Chatham-Kent-Essex are going to say today. I understand that one member won't be able to speak, obviously. But I want to know: Who's standing up for those people? Because their MPPs are AWOL; they're missing in action when it comes to speaking for their municipalities and their constituents on this issue.

1610

It's a simple motion. It's very clear. I'm asking all members of the House today to support it. It is the right thing to do—to take a step back.

We're not even talking about how the government has messaged this whole wind development issue. They have not been straight with the people. They've implied that somehow this is going to get us off coal. There's nobody in the industry who would ever make that statement. If we get off coal, it'll be because we have built enough gas plants, not because we've got wind turbines that run intermittently. Even the Premier himself has said, on the record, in this House, in his own words, that wind is unreliable. Check the record. That's what the Premier said. You're not going to shut down a dispatchable form of energy for something that is inherently unreliable, but that's what the Minister of Energy is trying to sell to the people of Ontario.

It's about time that the Minister of Energy, the government and the Premier got honest on this subject. Maybe they can start today, by supporting this motion.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'm pleased to be able to speak to the PC caucus motion, on behalf of Tim Hudak and the PC caucus, which is calling for a moratorium on wind farms until health and environmental impacts are studied and until local planning authority is restored to municipalities.

I'd like to recognize Gary Chandler and Dan Scharf, who have travelled across the province, making a five-hour trip from my constituency in Nepean-Carleton just to be here today. They did this to bring their views to this Ontario Legislature because this Liberal government has taken away their voice with a made-in-Toronto plan for our small community. The proposed development of 10 very large wind turbines—and, as I learned today, it could be as many as 28 wind turbines—is contentious with residents, raising many legitimate and valid concerns.

This debate is not about wind power as an important component of Ontario's energy planning. There's no argument that Ontario must continue to diversify and investigate ways of shifting to clean and renewable power, because we know we need to act to protect the environment and, yes, we need to act to reduce our energy consumption and find greener ways to produce power. This debate is about forcing rural communities across Ontario to accept made-in-Toronto solutions to problems in our bigger cities.

The Globe and Mail of April 7 agrees, because they suggested that wind power is "not simply benign, and the potential impact of wind turbines on the environment, the landscape and people's health need more attention."

That is what this motion is calling for: to ensure that we're paying attention to the people who are here today, and the people who couldn't come here today, who have concerns with the Green Energy Act.

The Green Energy Act forces communities like mine, like the member from Dufferin-Caledon's, the member from Wellington-Halton Hills's, the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound's—I could go on. It forces our communities and our municipalities to accept made-in-Toronto planning solutions by removing local planning authority from them. Wind turbines and other green energy initiatives are able to bypass the consent of local citizens and their councils.

Let me put that into perspective. Municipalities have a say on what gets built in their communities, and that is whether it is a housing development, whether it's a shopping centre, whether it's a road or whether it's a transit-way. But in this case, when it comes to wind turbines, local voices are shut out of the debate.

The residents in Nepean-Carleton have been left with little opportunity to have their say on a wind farm that this Liberal government is forcing on our small community of North Gower. It's yet another example of how this government consults with few while implementing legislation which could have such a far-reaching impact on the health and well-being of our citizens. It's yet another example of how, after six years in power, the McGuinty Liberals are so focused on subsidizing their green energy schemes and giving away sweetheart deals that they've forgotten about protecting the views of democratically elected local governments.

It's time to hit the rethink button, just like you did last week on another issue, and it's time that he supports my colleague from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke's motion calling for a moratorium on wind farms until the studies are in and the municipal authority is restored.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to debate today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to speak on this very important issue.

I will start, at the outset, by saying that I really can't believe that we, in the 21st century, 10 years into the decade, are having this debate, that we are having a debate and questioning whether or not we should be using renewable sources of energy to meet our demand for energy. I think it's about time that we move away from carbon-based, coal-based sources of energy and ensure that we're creating energy in our province which is sustainable and which is renewable through renewable resources. Wind, solar, biothermal, biomass and all these other sources of energy are good alternatives. There are ample signs and there are ample studies that have been done.

We in Ontario are not the first ones to engage in this exercise. Europe has been doing this for a very, very long time, and that's what the impetus was behind the Green Energy Act. It's a progressive piece of legislation which ensures that we reduce our dependency on carbon-based, fossil-based sources of energy. It tries to ensure that we engage in a culture of conservation by which we cannot use as much energy as we are accustomed to using. That's something that we, as North Americans—that's the kind of lifestyle we live, but I think we need to reconsider that. It also provides incentives and an opportunity for all of us to be able to generate renewable sources of energy.

The Green Energy Act has been incredibly revolutionary in terms of where we're taking our province, in the manner in which we create energy in this great province of ours, to the point where it has made us a leader in North America. Other jurisdictions, like British Columbia, for example, are literally engaging in a cut-and-paste exercise to adopt the kind of scheme we have come forward with—a progressive, modern approach to ensure that we promote the creation of renewable sources of energy in the province of Ontario.

I can tell you, from my community's point of view in Ottawa Centre, how much excitement there is for the use of this particular legislation to make sure that we use the mechanism of feed-in tariffs, or microFIT, in a smaller capacity, so that we can all participate in the creation of greener energy. We can all engage, individually and collectively, in the exercise of reducing emissions of greenhouse gases to make sure that we are not impacting the environment, to make sure that the energy we are using in our homes is sustainable, that it's created by a mechanism that is depending on renewable resources.

I think study after study has shown that. That is the direction our government is taking. It's the right direction to take. Wind is a big part of it. There are studies that have been done through the World Health Organization which have found no negative impact on health. I think, through this legislation—

Interruption.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The galleries have been advised that you aren't to participate in this debate in any way. I will give you a warning, and if there are any other outbursts, I may have to consider clearing the public galleries. Please co-operate with us.

Member for Ottawa Centre.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker—

Interruption.

1620

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Member, take your seat.

I can't identify who's speaking out, and I certainly don't want to clear the galleries. I don't want to have to do that. So, please, co-operate and listen to the debate.

The member for Ottawa Centre.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I'm not going to take too much time further, but I do want to say that—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I want to make myself clear, and I'm sure that most of you want to see and listen to this debate.

The member for Ottawa Centre.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: A lot of consultation has gone into this legislation. This is the right approach to take for our province. This will revolutionize the way we are building the kind of 21st-century economy we're building. I think the Samsung investment of \$7 billion in our province is a great example; it is a great highlight of the potential of this legislation and the kinds of jobs it will create for the future, today and moving forward.

I will be voting against this particular motion because that is not the right approach to take.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Toby Barrett: Good afternoon, everyone. I want to say at the outset that I support the motion to provide some answers not only with respect to health impacts, but I also support the direction to lift the green energy gag order on municipal councils, councils that aren't able to be part of what's going on in their own backyards.

There's no mandate for municipalities to listen to people. This government is not listening to people. In fact, they've already indicated that they're not going to let this motion pass.

When it comes to the health impacts, both sides of the debate can produce studies to support their claims, but that said, I have received a deluge of disturbing reports of the effects down in my riding of Haldimand-Norfolk. We have hundreds of wind turbines along Lake Erie. I spoke with two constituents just this morning who again explained to me the symptoms that they attribute to turbine sickness.

One resident is here today, a former Green Party candidate, a former wind supporter, who is now depleting her resources to rent an apartment in town because she cannot remain in her home and get a decent night's sleep.

Given the reported plans locally for another 200 wind turbines in Haldimand and Norfolk—we all know about Samsung and their plans to set up adjacent to Lake Erie—I suspect I will be hearing more input. I'm told the Samsung development will be the largest of its kind in all of North America. That impact on my riding deserves input from municipal councillors. It was a mistake to take away those oversight powers. In one fell swoop, the legislation removed all rights from my constituents and their locally elected representatives.

We all know that the impact is on rural areas, as with my area, not so much the urban areas, other than—and I've met a number of people from Scarborough this morning as well. Again, the Scarborough Bluffs development requires study, as with the Leamington developments that would be placed on crown-owned land under the waters of, first, Lake Ontario and also Lake Erie.

I should add that these democratic powers should be restored. Representatives should have a chance to hear these personal accounts first-hand. I will indicate that down my way, Long Point is on a major bird migration

route. I am now hearing from duck hunters concerned about the flyways from the Prairies, Long Point across Lake Erie to the United States. We've had one very recent avian casualty, an eagle—a so-called careless eagle wiped out by a turbine. Again, we don't know the impact on flight paths. We need more study. We need a moratorium.

I recently received a call from Pennsylvania state representative John Hornaman with respect to a bill he's putting forward with respect to large turbines on the United States side of Lake Erie. This would be the Erie ridge, the Clear Creek ridge—shallow land under the lake. They are bringing in legislation. Ontario already has to permit the lease of the land under the water. Again, what impact will this have? Or perhaps this is a positive.

Just to wrap up, we know the interest is there. I get the phone calls and the emails. There has to be a better structure in place for decision-making.

I will mention as well for anyone present: Please contact my office. Every year or so I host a symposium on energy and our environment. I will be hosting another one down in Jarvis this fall.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'd like to thank the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke for his concerns for the health of his constituents and of all Ontarians. This concern, I am sure, is the same that all my colleagues share.

The member's motion suggests, by implication, that the health effects of wind turbines are not sufficiently understood. I propose that we start, then, by talking about what we do know, and we can do that with numbers, like the number 668. That's how many premature deaths are directly caused by the dirty fumes belched out by coal-fired generating stations every year in this province. Or 928: the number of annual hospital admissions we can blame on dirty coal. Or 1,100: the number of emergency room visits coal gives us annually. And 333,600: the cases of minor illness we have over the course of 12 months thanks to coal plants. They cause up to \$3 billion in yearly health damages. And how's 30 million for a number? That's the number of tonnes of dangerous greenhouse gases historically pumped into the air by coal plants in Ontario each and every year.

This is to say nothing of the massive damages that are being caused even now by global climate change, which, as I've said many times before in this chamber, is the greatest challenge we face today as a province and as a planet. The concentration of carbon dioxide in our atmosphere has already passed the safe and stable limit of 350 parts per million. Many scientists suggest that this will already increase the temperature of our earth by two degrees. Today, it's at 387 parts per million, and it is steadily creeping toward 450, a level that many scientists say will be a catastrophic concentration.

Interjection.

Mr. Phil McNeely: That's enough of dirty coal over there.

We may be there in as little as 20 years. By then, summer Arctic ice cover, which 30 years ago covered an area roughly the size of Canada, will probably be gone. Already, we've lost an area of summer ice almost the size of Quebec. Is this happening because of what the deniers say, that it's the earth's orbit around the sun, the tilt of the earth's axis, or cosmic rays? Of course not. It is happening because of what we're doing to our atmosphere. According to James Hansen, one of the world's most renowned climate scientists, a lot of the problems come from coal burning.

So let's be clear: What the opposition is suggesting today isn't simply delaying the implementation of wind turbine projects—because electricity they would generate has to come from somewhere, and right now it's coming from coal. So the possible negative impacts of wind turbines have to be stacked up against the clear, documented negative impacts of coal. The comparison is very clear, because there is simply no scientific evidence that suggests that there are any negative health impacts from turbines at all. There are no published data that confirm the anecdotal claims of non-experts that the low-frequency noise generated by turbines is harmful. In fact, no less an authority than the World Health Organization has concluded that there's no evidence of such health risks. We know this because we have done our due diligence. Our government has consulted with the Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion and Wind Concerns Ontario. We're establishing funding and an academic research chair for the ongoing study of renewable energy technologies and health, and we welcome the selection of Dr. Siva Sivothythaman from the University of Waterloo to this position. We've established a minimum setback of 550 metres so that noise levels are limited to 40 decibels, and as the number and loudness of turbines increases, so does the setback. In establishing this minimum setback, we used the most conservative modelling available. Out of all the jurisdictions in the world with wind programs, we're the only one with such a stringent setback.

1630

We're being careful—

Interjection.

Mr. Phil McNeely: I did myself; I've looked at it. You just listen; you'll learn a lot.

We're being careful about this because our government is concerned about the health and welfare of all Ontarians. But we shouldn't trade caution for paralysis—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I've asked the gallery to listen carefully to this debate, and now I'll ask the members to listen very carefully to this debate. Please.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I no more than ask, and you start up again. Please.

Mr. Phil McNeely: This government has been a world leader in the fight against climate change. I was pleased to work with the Ministry of Energy and Infra-

structure in preparing and rolling out the Green Energy Act, which will create 50,000 jobs over the next three years. Our government is committed to reducing our greenhouse gas emissions to 6% below 1990 levels by 2014, and 15% by 2020. We have made a bold commitment to shut down all our coal-fired generating stations by 2014.

Renewable energy sources will be the key to this strategy, like the 1,200 megawatts of wind energy we have brought online since 2003. But there are many members opposite, I'm sad to say, who have stood firmly against this. Ontarians have rejected their climate change denial, and their attempt to stop progressive green energy legislation has been defeated, so now they try to delay. But I wonder how long we have to wait. How many studies producing no evidence of health risks will it take? And how many thousands of people will suffer in the meantime?

We know that the risks of not building wind turbines are urgent and real, and that this motion, however well intended, is much more likely to harm Ontarians than to protect them, which is why I will not support this motion.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I have to begin by responding to the Ottawa-Orléans member, because for him to stand here in this chamber and read a prepared speech that talks about no health repercussions—I'm reading from an August 2009 Health Canada letter. Health Canada advised that "there are peer-reviewed scientific articles indicating that wind turbines may have an adverse impact on human health." If that isn't good enough for you to further study the issues that are resulting from wind turbines, I don't know what will convince you.

It was during second reading debate in March 2009 that I first highlighted the health and planning concerns that families and municipalities had with the Green Energy Act. Municipalities were concerned that the Green Energy Act stripped away their planning powers for wind turbine projects, which, of course, it did. The health concerns centred around the adverse effects that wind turbines were having on residents who live with wind turbines 24 hours a day. Residents feel let down that the McGuinty government is moving forward with these projects without any independent, third party health study effects that wind turbines have on people.

Some 55 councils across Ontario have passed resolutions asking for exactly what the Progressive Conservatives are advocating today: a moratorium on wind projects until a comprehensive health study is complete and to return municipal planning control back to their communities.

In my own riding, the townships of Mulmur, East Garafraxa, Melancthon, East Luther Grand Valley, Amaranth and the town of Caledon have all passed resolutions in support. As elected representatives, we have a responsibility to respond to these people.

Two weeks ago I tabled a private member's bill which, if passed, would return the planning power for re-

newable energy projects back into the hands of municipalities. Municipalities do not want to abolish renewable energy projects; they want to control where they are in their municipalities. They want the ability to plan, to take into consideration their own unique needs. Municipalities know what is best for their community. Why not let them continue that work?

Since I introduced my private member's bill, I have been flooded with emails and phone calls of support. I encourage my colleagues across the floor to have a look at the 55 councils that have passed resolutions. I assure you that you will find councils from your ridings there.

Municipalities, those who attended the rally today, and the galleries full of people listening to this debate are counting on your support. Families who have been driven out of their homes because wind turbines caused them sleep deprivation and headaches are counting on your support.

A comprehensive health study is needed before these projects can move forward, and municipalities want to assure that planning control for these projects rests with them.

There is one other history lesson I would like to remind the members of the Liberal Party about. The last time a provincial government removed planning authority from the municipalities was under NDP Premier Bob Rae, or as my colleagues to the left like to call him, the great Liberal Premier Bob Rae. He formed the IWA, the Interim Waste Authority. He formed an interim waste authority whose sole responsibility was to remove the ability of municipalities to choose where landfill sites would go. And we all know what happened to Bob Rae in 1995.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Arnott: Fourteen months ago, when the McGuinty government introduced its so-called Green Energy Act, I said that a more appropriate title would be the "power grab act." This legislation confiscated local councils' decision-making authority while dismissing serious questions about wind turbines and their potential effects on human health. It removed opportunities for public input.

The intervening months have revealed just how this government, through its Green Energy Act, is running roughshod over municipalities, communities and individual families right across the province.

From my own riding of Wellington-Halton Hills, the Oppose Bellwood Wind Farm action group has organized, joining Wind Concerns Ontario and other community groups from over 50 municipalities. They're here today in support of our motion, and I want to thank them very much for coming to Queen's Park today.

My colleagues Tim Hudak, John Yakabuski, Sylvia Jones, Jim Wilson, Elizabeth Witmer and others have worked hard in standing up for common sense on this issue.

I also want to thank another member, Bill Murdoch, who was the first to introduce a resolution calling for a

moratorium on wind farms until such time as the necessary health studies had been completed. Unfortunately, every Liberal present at the time voted to defeat Mr. Murdoch's resolution late last year.

At least on this side of the House, there are many MPPs who believe we need to take another look at this. We believe it because it's the right thing to do. We believe it because it's what our constituents rightly want.

We know that municipalities across Ontario agree with us. The county of Wellington and the township of Centre Wellington, among others, have passed a resolution originating in December with the township of Mapleton.

The Premier should be aware of the many legitimate concerns, both in terms of possible health effects and in terms of ignoring local municipalities' concerns for a long time. In fact, last week during question period, I sent him my copy of Dr. Nina Pierpont's recent book, *Wind Turbine Syndrome*, which documents many of the health concerns. I urge him to read it with an open mind.

With regard to those health effects, CTV News quotes the Premier as follows: "We do have a responsibility in Ontario to make sure that we take advantage of all the experiences out there and the very best medical advice," said the Premier in April 2009. That would seem sensible, except that the Premier's own policy today stands in direct contradiction to that responsibility, which he had apparently accepted.

Since that interview of one year ago, what has changed? Certainly not the McGuinty government's policy. They continue to forge ahead, pulling out all the stops to install wind turbines wherever possible, regardless of the health effects, regardless of the cost, regardless of the long-term economics and regardless of local concern.

Now the Premier is appointing a research chair to study health effects, and he has talked about that in the House. He's spending public money to the tune of \$300,000 a year for five years. But if the Premier really believes that a study is necessary, surely he recognizes the legitimacy of the health concerns. If there is in fact a chance of health risks, how can he possibly plow ahead with his "wind farms at all costs" policy without first knowing the conclusions of such a study? By the time the research chair completes his work, the wind turbines will be up and in operation, and the study, regardless of its conclusions, will have been moot. It will have been a waste of money. That's the glaring contradiction in this government's policy. It's totally irresponsible and potentially reckless.

1640

I trust and believe that there may be some Liberal members who recognize that too, Liberal members in whose ridings wind farms are likely to go up. Their constituents must surely hope that they will take those concerns directly to the Premier in order to change this wrong-headed policy. Even if the government forces its members to vote against our motion today, we are not giving up. In fact, next week I plan to begin tabling a petition with many hundreds of signatures from my

riding in support of the spirit of this motion, and I urge all members of this House to support it today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I wanted to speak to this motion on behalf of some of the Ontarians who live in Liberal-held ridings and feel their concerns are not being voiced by their own MPPs. Specifically, I speak on behalf of those residents in Scarborough who live south of Kingston Road and who are represented by their MPP for Scarborough—Guildwood, Margaret Best, who co-incidentally serves as Minister of Health Promotion. The Ministry of Health Promotion's vision includes making the province "a healthy, prosperous place to live," and includes in its goals "to create healthy and supportive environments" and "lead the development of healthy public policy...."

Many of the people living in the Guildwood Village area in her riding and elsewhere along the Scarborough Bluffs believe that wind turbines are not a healthy public policy and do not create a healthy environment. Her constituents would like to hear what the minister has to say about this issue, both as MPP for the riding, which is facing the possibility of an offshore wind farm, and as the Minister of Health Promotion. Has the minister undertaken any studies with regard to the health effects of wind turbines? Isn't that her responsibility?

Since no one on the government side is standing up for those Ontarians who live near wind farms and are concerned about the possible health effects, we in the Progressive Conservative caucus are doing that in our resolution today, our motion. Our motion calls for a moratorium on all industrial and wind projects until an independent study of the health and environmental impacts is completed. We are also calling for the government to return planning authority where it belongs—to the municipality—in this matter. It's time for the member for Scarborough—Guildwood and other Liberal government members to make their position clear on this issue. I submit they can do that today by voting in favour of this motion.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate? The member for—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I'm not going to leave it up to you two, so I'll go to Simcoe—Grey.

Mr. Jim Wilson: In the short time I have, too, I want to thank the members of the public who are in the gallery, and I want to thank the 80 people who came down from my riding, from Clearview, Singhampton and the Collingwood area, and participated in the rally.

As I said at the rally today, as a former energy minister, I can tell you that we absolutely have to question these large industrial wind turbine projects. The honourable members across the way say this is going to be the saviour in order to close down coal-fired plants. That's bunk, and that's bunk whether you live in Europe or any other place in the world that you can point to

where there are a significant number of wind turbines. It's a very small part of the electricity mix.

You've got to move forward and start talking about further refurbishing the nuclear fleet and bringing in nuclear power. The only reason your power demand is down by 33% right now is that most people seem to be unemployed. Some 350,000 people in the manufacturing sector in this province don't have a job, so the factories are closed. That's the only reason you've kept pollution at par in the last few years. The only coal-fired plant that ever was closed in this province was done by the PC government under Elizabeth Witmer as environment minister, and I was energy minister at the time.

I'll also say, as a former Minister of Health, that absolutely—a local example: A public medical officer of health in Grey county said last year, and kept emphasizing it with the government and was totally ignored, that you absolutely should put a moratorium on it until the health effects are known, because she has had, as I do—I have people coming into my office who look quite sick to me. I may be no Dr. Phil over there, but they look quite sick to me. They live near these projects, and you have to believe them. You should at least give them the benefit of the doubt.

Finally, as I said at the rally today, you're not being fully truthful with the public in terms of the actual costs. When you're awarding 20-year contracts that are 40-cents-plus per kilowatt hour for wind power and up to 80 cents for solar, when that is factored into the mix, people are going to have sticker shock. In fact, the Green Energy Act, we estimate, will cost consumers about \$350 a year, and we're told by some people that that's off by several factors. So it could be hundreds more per year by the time we're all done.

The other thing is, and it has been mentioned by all colleagues, when over 50 municipalities had the courage against the Liberal government—you might take away their funding for a road or something, the way you guys operate. The fact of the matter is, they had the courage, like the 16 municipalities in Simcoe county, including Clearview township, which I asked the Premier about a month ago in this House—and the Acting Premier that day, Brad Duguid, answered as he always does every day, that he really doesn't care what the municipalities think; he's going ahead as energy and infrastructure minister and getting rid of any local say. As has been pointed out, the last time that was done in this Legislature, that Premier didn't survive very long.

I ask Liberal members here today, many of them facing large projects in their ridings, to take the time, have a moratorium, say no to these companies right now until you get your facts straight, because right now your facts aren't straight and you're not sticking up for your constituents. This resolution gives you an opportunity to do that today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I'm happy to rise today to enter into this debate on the motion introduced by the member

from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. He is clearly doing it in the best interests of having a full public debate on the particular concerns that he's raised.

We have also had the opportunity previously, courtesy of the private member's bill from the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound that was brought in at the end of last year, and I was happy to enter into that debate to focus specifically on the health concerns related to wind turbines. At that time, I reviewed what had been done in terms of investigation of these potential health effects, and certainly I was very satisfied that in fact our government had taken serious steps to review the health concerns raised by residents who feel that they may have been impacted.

We have many, many years of experience in Europe in relation to potential health effects. They have been studied.

We are particularly fortunate here in Ontario that we have the Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion, established by our government, which is a repository of excellence in terms of environmental epidemiology. One of the individuals there at the agency is Dr. Ray Copes. He's the director of environmental and occupational health. He presented a full and very thorough scientific review of the potential health hazards of wind turbines in a webinar on September 10, 2009. His review—this is a totally objective individual with tremendous expertise in the area—concluded that there is no evidence of noise-induced health effects at levels emitted by wind turbines. The literature reviewed did reveal that there were anecdotal reports of symptoms such as sleep disturbance, headaches, dizziness, anxiety, concentration and learning problems, and ringing in the ears, but there was no scientific evidence to date to demonstrate a causal association between wind turbine noise and adverse health effects. There were a few Swedish studies that reported that noise from wind turbines was certainly annoying to some people.

There has been a concern expressed that turbines produce sound commonly referred to as low-frequency noise and that this can be harmful. However, there is no published data that confirm the claims of adverse health effects for low-frequency sounds of low pressure.

In 1999—

Interruption.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Sergeant, will you remove that person, please?

Interruption.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): This House will recess for 15 minutes while the galleries are cleared.

The House recessed from 1651 to 1709.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Oak Ridges–Markham had the floor.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to resume after a hiatus.

As a former medical officer of health for the region of York, I'm not unfamiliar with the type of anxiety that people have when it comes to their health, which was

demonstrated here today. However, as I always did as a medical officer of health—I used science in terms of the decision-making that I made in that position, which was often quite controversial as well. So I'm happy to reiterate the statement I made that we do not see any health effects from wind turbines after a full and comprehensive review that has been undertaken.

However, notwithstanding that there is no evidence of harmful health effects, our government does take public concerns regarding renewable energy technology seriously. We have taken a cautious approach when setting standards for wind setbacks and noise limits to protect Ontarians. We have established a minimum setback of 550 metres so that noise levels would be limited to 40 decibels at the periphery, the equivalent of the noise in a library or quiet office. Setbacks increase with the number and loudness of turbines. So we have established the setback based on science and we've used the most stringent modelling available nationally and internationally. Of all the jurisdictions in the world with wind programs, we are the only one with such a stringent setback.

We are going even further as a precaution and we are developing the science to monitor and measure low-frequency noise, either audible or felt as vibration, as currently there are no established and accepted protocols. Energy proponents will also be required to monitor and address perceptible low-frequency noise once these protocols are established.

So in summary, I would like to simply say that Ontario has taken a cautious approach to setting standards for wind setbacks and noise limits to protect Ontarians. Ontario is a leader in establishing clear setbacks for renewable energy projects that are protective of human health and the environment.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I think we've seen in this Legislature this afternoon, with the people who have gathered here, obviously with some very strong feelings concerning the farm projects that are being built in their own backyards, that this is what happens when we have a government that passed a Green Energy Act in 2009 very hastily, provided little in the way of input for citizens of this province, and never bothered to address the ordinary and real concerns they had, many of them related to the health risks. As a result, when you take away the voice of people at home, as that act did, because no longer are local communities involved in making the planning decisions, and you take away their voice here in the Legislature, as these people have seen their voice taken away, you see what happens.

I would advise this government that you'd better sit up and listen, because what you've done has eroded the democratic rights of people in this province, not only with this piece of legislation and your actions here today, but some of the others. This is an issue that is real; it's serious. I first raised it as health critic in 2009 and you still continue, to this day.

Listen to the people who were here today in front of Queen's Park and the people in this Legislature. As you

probably heard, their concerns are real. The health risks are real. It's time for you to give the voice back to local communities when it comes to planning and it's time for you to put a moratorium on these projects until such time as we have a study of the health risks.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate.

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to be able to offer a few comments today on this very important motion. The people who came to Queen's Park today are people who go to work every day, pay their bills, raise their children, and what do they expect in return? They expect a government that respects their wishes, they expect a government that provides safe communities, they expect a government that will listen to them, and what they found today was one that doesn't.

What I want to comment on particularly are those people who have come forward to me on the issues of a complete sense of abandonment by government, by the ministry, by the people who they trusted would make the right decisions.

I received an email this morning that came from Sandra Hackenberg in my riding, and she said, "Please make my voice heard on April 28." She wanted me to know about her friend who now has had to live outside of her own house for a year. And there are others who can tell that story. There are others who are facing that kind of financial burden in a situation they never imagined themselves to be in.

Another friend of mine who lives in the next riding over has watched the turbines go up and the value of her land go down. She was widowed very suddenly, and this piece of land is her financial future.

When we look around us and see the kind of people this government is impacting, it's most important that, on this side, we tell them that we are here today to demonstrate, by this motion, our commitment to give them the kind of government they deserve, if not today, then in October 2011.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Before I go on to the main body of my speech, I just want to say to the Sergeant-at-Arms and the security staff here that although I have at times been on the other side of the fence, I must say that they handled things well today, and they deserve credit and acclaim from the people in this chamber. They showed respect and they showed restraint.

I also have to say to those who are protesting in the galleries today, for people who engage in civil disobedience, they also showed restraint. They were non-violent, and for that—people standing up for their beliefs—I have to have respect.

Having said all of that, today we're considering a resolution from Mr. Yakabuski that calls for a moratorium on all wind farm projects until independent, comprehensive study of the health and environmental impact of wind farms is completed, and further, that the Premier restore the planning authority governing wind farms to municipalities and local boards.

I'll go further in, but I want to say, just on the face of this resolution, if you're going to restore planning authority, it should be restored with regard to nuclear power plants and gas-fired power plants. That is far more substantial and significant, in my mind, than wind turbines, and I will address that in the course of my 35 minutes.

Secondly, there are many health studies that have been done in Europe, in the United Kingdom and here in Canada that, in terms of the responsibilities we have as legislators, I think, give us sufficient confidence to proceed with investment in renewable energy.

The reality of this resolution being put forward by this member is to stop the installation of wind turbines in this province. I know the member will talk about the fact that it restores the planning power of municipalities. When we debated the Green Energy Act, I opposed the withdrawal of power from the municipalities because I felt that the goals the government wanted to reach could be reached without taking that step. But today the reality is that this resolution is directed against green power, using municipal authority as a tool, not as the principle that's being put forward.

It is being argued that we should not build wind turbines because we haven't done full health studies and, thus, there may be a risk to people. I see this resolution as being very similar to the sorts of delay tactics I have seen over the last two decades to stop action on climate change: It might be a threat to our economy if we take action on climate change; we don't know all the science yet, so let's back off on taking action. I think that the motion, fundamentally, is flawed right there. If, in fact, there is a deep concern about health, noise, emissions, why is there not a resolution calling for the end of road building in Ontario? I can tell you right now, without a doubt, that the more roads and expressways that are built, the more cars that are on the roads, the greater the health problems that we face. Why not a call to end any airport construction or expansion? Because the reality when you look around the world is that air travel causes significant impacts on the health and well-being of the people who live under those flight paths.

1720

I think the reality is that we are not in the end talking about health; we are talking about a motion to push off, to do away with, one of the more significant tools, one of the more significant instruments that can be used to reduce pollution-causing electricity generation in this society.

Let's talk for a minute about the health issues, because the very foundation of this argument is that, in fact, there is a profound health problem—a health problem that no one understands, that has to be addressed, has to be taken on—as if there is no one who has looked at this issue, thought it through, and presented conclusions.

Ontario's chief medical officer of health, Dr. Arlene King, last October said, "There is no scientific evidence, to date, to demonstrate a causal association between wind turbine noise and adverse health effects." I have to say,

the chief medical officer of health for the province deserves some respect. She is a credible source of opinion on these matters.

Dr. Isra Levy, Ottawa's medical officer of health—his quote: "The Ontario government has fulfilled the request by Ottawa city council to conduct a comprehensive review of the available peer-reviewed medical literature regarding wind-turbine-related health issues. The review did not find evidence of health effects that would warrant public health interventions...." Or Quebec public health.

If you look at people who work in the field of epidemiology and public health, you will find that they, on the whole, either see negligible impact or no impact. And where they see negligible impact, that will be related to night-time noise, and that is an issue and that does have to be addressed. I will get back to that as we go through.

If we look at the European experience, Denmark has been a leader in wind power since the 1970s. They have an industry in that country, a country with a population of the GTA, that creates thousands of jobs and adds significantly to the country's export earnings. Denmark is 10,000 square kilometres—that's smaller than Nova Scotia—and it's got as many people as the GTA. We do not have, from Denmark, a wave of illness related to wind turbines. That is not part of the literature. That is not part of the experience of that country.

Germany, where wind turbines are the second-largest consumer of German steel: Germany is three times smaller than Ontario, with eight times the population—three times smaller, eight times the population, and lots of wind turbines.

I have to say, I've had opportunities over the last decade and a half to work at some length with environmentalists in Europe, to talk with them, those who, since the early 1980s, have lived in a situation where more and more wind turbines have been deployed in some areas of Denmark at a level far denser than anything we see here in Ontario. I've talked to people whose primary focus in their environmental activities is looking out for environmental threats to health, people who have worked on toxic chemical issues, people who have worked on new developments, and, frankly, people who have not seen wind turbines as a health issue, but rather as an instrument for reducing health problems in societies.

I won't argue that there are no disputes in Europe on the siting of wind turbines; that's a simple reality. There are very different views on how the landscape should look. There are people who live in a rural setting now who don't want any change in that rural setting. That's a fair basis for making an argument. It's a very different argument from a health argument. There are different feelings about how wind turbines should be owned, but when I talked to people, when I go to the legislative library and ask for research, ask them to get reports from the Journal of the American Medical Association and the Lancet, to do wide-ranging research of the literature, I don't see some mysterious illness or syndrome that arises from wind turbines.

What I do see is that wind turbines can make noise, although, to be honest, living in a city and going up to wind turbines, they seem awfully quiet to me. If that noise is not mitigated by proper siting, then you could have disturbance of people's sleep at night. That can be an issue. I have to say, as someone whose riding abuts the Don Valley expressway, and having lived in an apartment building that overlooked the Don Valley expressway, there's no question that people in urban settings hear a fair amount of noise. People in rural settings may not encounter as much. But there is no mysterious issue here. There's an issue of making sure that the noise levels are such that people are able to sleep well, and that means that wind turbines have to be properly sited.

If I go to the literature from the World Health Organization, there was a fourth ministerial conference held by World Health Organization Europe in 2004. In Energy, Sustainable Development and Health: Background Document, they look at the number of cases of bronchitis per terawatt hour of power produced in children. Terawatt hours—let's just say, a lot of electricity. If you look at the comparison between the different sources of electricity and how they can be compared in terms of their impact on bronchitis, there's coal followed by oil, followed by biomass and gas, followed by waste incineration. At the very bottom are hydro energy, wind and photovoltaic—almost imperceptible on this graph.

So if someone wants to ask about the health impacts of wind turbines, look at the comparison between the different forms of electricity generation in Europe and see that if you're concerned about bronchitis and asthma—and I have to say that in my riding there's a lot of asthma, and parents are very concerned about the issue—then wind turbines are far safer, far cleaner than the other technologies that are available.

If you go to the conclusions of this World Health Organization study, they have to say that, "The different forms of electrical power production are associated with varying health effects on industry workers and the general population... The European Commission ... found that the effects are greatest from the coal cycle, followed by the oil and gas cycles. Renewable sources, such as photovoltaic and wind energy, are associated with fewer health effects."

They go on to say in their conclusions, "The increased use of renewable energy, especially wind, solar and photovoltaic energy, will have positive health benefits, some of which have been estimated. Studies show that the health and the environmental benefits easily make up for the higher costs associated with renewable energy use."

I would say to Mr. Yakabuski, if you're curious about health studies, look at what the World Health Organization in Europe has produced as a comparison between the different sources of power. It is very clear. It is very clear to those who work with epidemiological evidence, who look at the generation of electricity, which is the safest source of energy.

There's the discussion about noise. World Health Organization Europe produced a study, Night Noise

Guidelines for Europe, a few years ago. They looked at the noise that disturbs people. They looked at what the major sources are, and they show a graph in their executive summary that comes out of the Netherlands. Road traffic, neighbours, air traffic and recreation were at the top. They didn't do wind turbines in this study, generally speaking, because the noise issues there are fairly small, but in their recommendations they say that if you're going to have a night noise guideline for Europe, their recommendation is 40 decibels, a way of measuring noise levels—about the sound in a quiet office or a quiet library. That's the standard that's been set in Ontario. That's why there's a setback for wind turbines.

So if our standard in Ontario is the same as that of the World Health Organization in Europe, and they have had a few decades of working with wind turbines, then I would suggest that the authors of this motion we're discussing today look at the literature for the World Health Organization and withdraw the motion they've put forward.

1730

One issue that comes up when you talk to people who are concerned about wind turbines is something called infrasound: the vibration from the wind turbines. The Journal of Low Frequency Noise, Vibration and Active Control published an article, *Infrasound Emission from Wind Turbines*, by Jørgen Jakobsen of the Danish Environmental Protection Agency, one of the documents that was provided to me by the library here at the Legislature. I'll quote from their abstract:

"A critical survey of all known published measurement results of infrasound from wind turbines has been made. The survey indicates that wind turbines of contemporary design with an upwind rotor generate very faint infrasound with a level far below the threshold of perception even at a rather short distance.... When longer distances are considered, neither downwind nor upwind turbines are capable of violating assessment criteria for infrasound."

In the UK, the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform produced a report by the University of Salford in July 2007. In their conclusions, they note:

"The number of noise complaints about wind farms has been compared with complaint statistics for other types of noise. The total number of complaints about noise generally exceeds those from wind farms by between four and five orders of magnitude, indicating that wind farm noise is a small-scale problem in absolute terms. In relative terms, about 20% of wind farm installations have been subject to complaints, but no data is available to compare this figure with that for other types of noise such as industrial noise."

I'll go back to my point, and that is that wind turbines, like roads, can create noise and thus, if you're going to site them in an area where people live, you have to site them with adequate setbacks so that the impact on those who are living near them is at 40 decibels or lower. If you're doing that, then you are acting in a responsible

way, consistent with the health findings of a variety of jurisdictions. If you do something other than that, then you may well cause problems. But that's the threshold. There is not a mysterious health issue that exists beyond that. I don't think there's a problem with studying it further. It's probably a good idea. I would think, at the same time, one should invest in studying the impact of nuclear power, gas-fired power or any other source of power that has an emission or a radiation. To single out wind, I don't think is useful or particularly rational.

I want to speak a bit about other elements that tie into this. I think that we could do better in meeting residents' concerns. This government is focused on corporate-owned wind farms, and they might benefit from involving or setting up more wind co-ops, as they have in Germany and Denmark, where they have found that because people locally own the wind turbines, the complaints about the turbines are dramatically lower. If people are making money from them, they see them as theirs. They see the noise, such as it is, as something that they're willing to make a trade-off with. As you well know, wind turbines are being located on farms in Ontario by farmers who are getting lease or rental payments from those wind turbine companies. So there are people who are making money, as farmers, from those leases, from those rentals. If in fact the ownership was spread around so that more people in an area were making money, rather than have corporations extract the value from a community, there would be much less resistance.

In the United States, in Iowa, there has been tremendous support for wind turbines. It's referred to as the second harvest for many farmers.

I had an opportunity a number of years ago, to meet with farmers from Pincher Creek, Alberta. Those farmers told me that the location of wind turbines on their cattle farms made the difference between staying on the land and being driven off the land. That steady source of revenue made a huge difference to them. You can look at the state of Victoria in Australia. They too are in a situation where farmers make money from the wind turbines that are located on their land.

If we were to follow this resolution, we would fall into a trap. We would miss the opportunity to build an industrial base that reflected 21st-century needs and opportunities. We would miss out on an energy source that is far less impacting and damaging than any other energy source that we would get, such as uranium, nuclear power or gas.

I want to cite a few other health sources.

Wind energy has a much smaller human and environmental impact than coal or nuclear. Dr. Cornelia Baines, a University of Toronto epidemiology professor, states: "Large and well-designed comparative studies have examined the health effects of wind turbines in Holland, England and the US. There is no evidence of any significant negative impact on health."

A recent study by researchers at Stanford University concluded that wind had less impact on human health, water supply, land, wildlife and water pollution than even

solar power, geothermal, tidal power, wave power, hydro-electric power, nuclear power and coal.

A September 2009 report by Dr. Ray Copes, director of environmental and occupational health at the Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion, concluded that, "There is no scientific evidence to date to demonstrate a causal association between wind turbine noise and adverse health effects," although it "sometimes may be annoying to some people, which may result in stress and sleep disturbance." Thus the need to site wind turbines properly so that the noise impact on people's homes is relatively small.

In June 2009, the acting medical officer of health for the Chatham-Kent Health Unit concluded that, "There is no scientifically valid evidence that wind turbines are causing direct health effects, although the body of valid evidence is limited. It is unlikely that evidence of adverse health effects will emerge in the future because there is no biologically plausible mechanism known by which wind turbines could cause health effects."

Yes, there's noise, but after that there is not some mysterious force that causes problems for people. Again, if there is noise, build properly, set back properly, and make sure there is adequate allowance. The standard that we have in Ontario is 40 decibels on average. That's consistent with the night noise guidelines for the European Union and with World Health Organization recommendations.

We don't have a major health problem with wind. We do know we have to site them properly, but I have to say, when we look at the impacts of turbines on the environment—and it was Mr. Barrett who spoke about that, spoke about dead birds—well, frankly, in this city that I'm speaking in right now, there are bank towers and apartment buildings that kill large numbers of birds regularly, and I have not heard yet from this caucus, from the opposition, that they are going to oppose all new construction because it will lead to the death of birds. That is the simple reality: Large glass towers lead to the death of birds.

The National Audubon Society "strongly supports properly sited wind power as a clean alternative energy source that reduces the threat of global warming."

So I've tried to cover off the health issues that this resolution is focused on, but I want to say that we are trying to deal with a variety of issues in this society that are quite substantial. We have to deal with climate change. The member from Ottawa-Orléans spoke to that, but I just want to add this: The simple reality is that this world is getting hotter and we do not know at what point that increasing warming will lead to very substantial negative effects. We don't know at what point it will lead to a change in rainfall patterns so substantial as to dramatically reduce the amount of food that's available. We don't know at what point it will lead to changes in the weather that will make some areas far less habitable than they are now.

1740

There are many other impacts that are there, but that issue is one that has to be dealt with, and the introduction

of renewable power is a critical piece of coming to grips with that. If we were to say, "We won't go forward with one of the most developed, cost-effective renewable energy technologies that's out there today," we would be saying, in effect, that we are accepting that climate change is something that we can't do anything about and we're just going to throw up our hands. That is not a credible position—not a credible position for a Legislature or for a party.

We're dealing with smog in this province. We're dealing with deaths from coal. That is not debated any more. The Ontario Medical Association, a number of years ago, came out with their report that over 9,000 people a year in Ontario die from smog. That is of consequence to us. Introducing technologies that produce electricity without producing smog is extremely important to the health and well-being of the people in this province, and yet we don't have a call for action to stop the development of any new gas-fired plants in this province because of health concerns.

When I introduced a resolution, a private member's bill, a year ago calling for a ban on the construction of a large gas-fired plant in northern York region, I didn't have the support of the Conservative caucus, and yet the people in that region wholly reject that gas-fired power plant. They called on this province for action. They called on this province to give them the power at the municipal level to reject a plant that's being built on a floodplain. I didn't see a resolution around that.

We have those two substantial problems, and we have a third, and that's that we are facing, in the next few years or few decades, a peak in the development or production of oil and gas, and that will have substantial, economically disruptive impacts on our society. It is very important that we rapidly move away from the need for oil and gas. We don't use much oil to make electricity in Ontario; we do use increasing amounts of gas. If we don't have the investment today in cost-effective technologies to produce electricity, we will put ourselves and our society's stability in jeopardy in the years to come.

I've talked in general terms about health and about other technologies. I want to talk a bit more about coal itself because, in fact, that is one of the substantial alternatives to building green power. Wind turbines are part of a spectrum of investments that can be made in green power. We have a crisis of air pollution that is not just a Toronto issue. It's bad in Windsor; it's bad all the way through southwestern Ontario. In fact, there are smog days in Muskoka. That comes with a cost: a cost in lives, first of all, to be sure, and that's the most important, but a cost in medical care and lost productivity in the billions of dollars, according to the OMA. Where are the calls for an accelerated shutdown of coal in this province? I have to say I haven't heard it from the energy critic for the Conservative Party, and frankly I haven't heard it from the Liberal government either.

While we're debating the building of wind turbines, we're continuing to burn coal that we don't need to burn and we are not putting in place the steps that we need to

put in place to actually make the transition to clean up our air. We don't have rules enforced for energy efficiency for buildings that are going to make the difference that has to be made. I've raised this issue before. We had presentations to that effect in the hearings on the Green Energy Act. That is a critical element, and yet I'm not seeing any action, nor am I seeing opposition day motions on this.

In Portugal, people are required, when they build new houses, to incorporate renewable energy technologies into those houses. We could be doing that. We build inefficient homes. We burn coal. We continue to allow sprawl. All of those things are having a huge impact on human health, but I am not hearing any expressions of concern about that.

I have to say to the government—I have to say to the Liberals and the Conservatives that I am not hearing you call for a 40% reduction in electricity consumption in this province by investing in energy efficiency. Some \$60 is being spent on generation for every dollar being spent on efficiency and conservation. It's upside-down priorities. If we want to save money and have an affordable electricity system and rapidly and cost-effectively clean up our air, that's where we have to go. But I have to say, that's not where we're going. That should be the centre of the debate, not a debate about whether or not we're going to invest in renewable energy.

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: There we go, on to the next issue, and that's around nuclear power. Recognize this: The Liberals' own targets for renewable power are about 8%, with 50% or more of the power in this province coming from nuclear power. The cost of that will be extraordinary. If we, in fact, go ahead and build two new reactors at Darlington—even though the Liberals have backed off for the moment, saying that \$26 billion is something they can't afford, I have to say that I think that's probably the real cost. We will see a variety of manoeuvres to cover that up. It will be funded in some way from general revenue rather than rates, but that probably was a fairly realistic assessment of what that will cost. That is extraordinarily expensive.

At the same time we're considering nuclear—and the member from Renfrew has called for more and more nuclear regularly—what about a review of the health impacts of nuclear energy? That's a substantial issue. It's a very substantial issue.

Instead of getting really serious about efficiency, the Liberals are serious about just one thing: spending more money to get us more in debt by building new nuclear reactors.

Let's talk about health studies and nuclear power. Durham region's radiation and health study in 2007 looked at health outcomes in the vicinity of the Pickering and Darlington nuclear reactors. Authors found statistically significant increases compared to Ontario levels in combined cancers—breast cancer, thyroid cancer, bladder cancer, multiple myeloma, leukemia—and congenital and neural tube defects. I would say that's enough

to trigger some action. That's enough to say, “We have to have a moratorium on refurbishing nuclear power plants or building new ones,” because in fact when you have studies that look in any depth at nuclear, what you see is cancer.

The German government did a series of studies based on British studies done in 1987 and 1989. The British studies done in that period showed a significantly elevated rate of leukemia in children under 15 within a 10-mile radius of nuclear plants in England and Wales.

In 2008, the Germans' KiKK study was carried out. It was a case-controlled study looking at individual cases of leukemia between 1980 and 2003 for children living near one of 16 nuclear power plants and matching them with children with similar characteristics who did not have leukemia. Residential distance to nuclear power plants was the only measured variable. The research question was, “Are the places of residence of children with leukemia closer to the nuclear power plant than the matched control children?” Studies showed an unequivocal positive relationship between a child's risk of being diagnosed with leukemia and residential proximity to the nearest nuclear power plant. This was statistically significant in the zero-to-five- and five-to-10-kilometre zones, and continued as a trend up to 50 kilometres from the nearest nuclear power plant.

1750

So if, in fact, we're concerned about health; if, in fact, we want to make sure that we have the best electricity system possible, I would say that we need to reject this motion from the Conservative Party and we need to reject the nuclear push from the Liberal Party. We need to build an electricity system that is extraordinarily efficient, that conserves power, one that takes advantage of 21st-century technologies and rejects those technologies that have shown, through their health impact and their cost, not to be good for Ontario.

I will not be voting for the Conservative resolution and I urge everyone in this House to reject it as well.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Kim Craiton: In 2006, I had the pleasure of opening a new business in Fort Erie called DMI; it produces wind turbines. They employed 30 people; in 2007 they went to 120, and in 2008 they expanded building and employed 240 people. They're now down to 60 people. They tell me that because of the Green Energy Act, 2009, their employment went up to 140.

Today, they called me and said, “We understand the intent of the PC motion, but we're extremely concerned. We rely on wind power as business. We employ 140 people at our wind tower manufacturing facility in Fort Erie. We're a serious contributor to the economy. We bring in millions of dollars from employees and their families maintaining residence, as well as subcontractors and other businesses. If this legislation halts or hampers further wind energy development, it not only threatens our community but it also threatens investments of over

\$30 million that we made in anticipation of opportunities for growth by wind projects in Ontario.

"The Green Energy Act has already attributed to some new productions at our facility. The immediate results have been encouraging and we would anticipate steady improvement going forward, with the potential for hiring even more people at our facility"—hiring more people into good-quality jobs.

I've indicated that I would put this into the record for them.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 43(d), it now being 10 to 6, I will call the vote.

Mr. John O'Toole: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I believe there's more time on the clock.

Interjection: A minute and a half.

Mr. John O'Toole: A minute and a half.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): There is not.

Mr. Yakabuski has moved opposition day number 3. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1753 to 1803.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Members, please take your seats. Government House leader, please take your seat.

Mr. Yakabuski has moved opposition day 3. All those in favour, please stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted
Barrett, Toby
Clark, Steve
Dunlop, Garfield
Elliott, Christine
Hardeman, Emie

Jones, Sylvia
MacLeod, Lisa
Martiniuk, Gerry
Miller, Norm
Munro, Julia
O'Toole, John

Savoline, Joyce
Sterling, Norman W.
Wilson, Jim
Witmer, Elizabeth
Yakabuski, John

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): All those opposed, please stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Albanese, Laura
Arthurs, Wayne
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bradley, James J.
Brown, Michael A.
Brownell, Jim
Chan, Michael
Craitor, Kim
Dickson, Joe
Duguid, Brad
Hoy, Pat
Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Johnson, Rick

Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Leal, Jeff
Mangat, Amrit
Marchese, Rosario
Matthews, Deborah
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine
Mitchell, Carol
Moridi, Reza
Murray, Glen R.
Naqvi, Yasir
Oraziotti, David
Pendergast, Leeanna
Phillips, Gerry

Ramal, Khalil
Ramsay, David
Rinaldi, Lou
Ruprecht, Tony
Sandals, Liz
Sergio, Mario
Smith, Monique
Tabuns, Peter
Van Bommel, Maria
Wilkinson, John
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 17; the nays are 40.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negated.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): It being past 6 of the clock, this House is adjourned until Thursday, April 29, at 9 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1806.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Aggelonitis, Hon. / L'hon. Sophia (LIB)	Hamilton Mountain	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington-Halton Hills	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Arthurs, Wayne (LIB)	Pickering-Scarborough East / Pickering-Scarborough-Est	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia-Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough-Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand-Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	Attorney General / Procureur général
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough-Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Broten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma-Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Caplan, David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Carroll, M. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham-Unionville	Minister of Tourism and Culture / Ministre du Tourisme et de la Culture
Chiarelli, Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West-Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean	
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds-Grenville	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton-Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Crozier, Bruce (LIB)	Essex	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga-Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax-Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale-High Park	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (LIB)	Prince Edward-Hastings	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Energy and Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Énergie et de l'Infrastructure
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor-Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Dunlop, Garfield (PC) Elliott, Christine (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB) Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB)	Oakville Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Gélinas, France (NDP) Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Nickel Belt Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry / Ministre du Développement du Nord, des Mines et des Forêts
Hampton, Howard (NDP) Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Kenora–Rainy River Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Hoy, Pat (LIB) Hudak, Tim (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jaczek, Helena (LIB) Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham Brampton–Springdale	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Johnson, Rick (LIB) Jones, Sylvia (PC) Klees, Frank (PC) Kormos, Peter (NDP) Kular, Kuldip (LIB) Kwinter, Monte (LIB) Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB) Leal, Jeff (LIB) Levac, Dave (LIB) MacLeod, Lisa (PC) Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock Dufferin–Caledon Newmarket–Aurora Welland Bramalea–Gore–Malton York Centre / York-Centre Glengarry–Prescott–Russell Peterborough Brant Nepean–Carleton Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP) Martiniuk, Gerry (PC) Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	Trinity–Spadina Cambridge London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB) McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McMeekin, Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	
McNeely, Phil (LIB) Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC) Miller, Paul (NDP)	Parry Sound–Muskoka Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Hon. / L'hon. Carol (LIB)	Huron–Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Munro, Julia (PC)	York-Simcoe	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	
Murray, Glen R (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Orazietti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB)	Kitchener-Conestoga	
Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (LIB)	Elgin-Middlesex-London	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (LIB)	Scarborough-Agincourt	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches-East York	
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Economic Development and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London-Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland-Quinte West	
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Nipissing	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton-Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto-Danforth	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga-Erindale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	
Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Perth-Wellington	Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener-Waterloo	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Garfield Dunlop
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Robert Bailey
Robert Bailey, Gilles Bisson
Jim Brownell, Kim Craiton
Bob Delaney, Garfield Dunlop
Amrit Mangat, Phil McNeely
John O'Toole
Clerks / Greffiers: William Short (pro tem.), Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Pat Hoy
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laura Albanese
Laura Albanese, Wayne Arthurs
Toby Barrett, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Pat Hoy, Norm Miller
Glen R Murray, Charles Sousa
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: David Orazietti
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Helena Jaczek
Bob Chiarelli, Steve Clark
Helena Jaczek, Kuldip Kular
Dave Levac, Rosario Marchese
Bill Mauro, David Orazietti
Joyce Savoline
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Laura Albanese, Michael A. Brown
Donna H. Cansfield, M. Aileen Carroll
Howard Hampton, Ernie Hardeman
Lisa MacLeod, Leeanna Pendergast
Jim Wilson
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Leeanna Pendergast
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Ted Chudleigh
Mike Colle, Christine Elliott
Peter Kormos, Reza Moridi
Leeanna Pendergast, Lou Rinaldi
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Bas Balkissoon
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Yasir Naqvi
Bas Balkissoon, Bob Delaney
Joe Dickson, Sylvia Jones
Amrit Mangat, Norm Miller
Yasir Naqvi, Michael Prue
Mario Sergio
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Norman W. Sterling
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Peter Shurman
M. Aileen Carroll, France Gélinas
Jerry J. Ouellette, David Ramsay
Liz Sandals, Peter Shurman
Norman W. Sterling, Maria Van Bommel
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Paul Miller
David Caplan, Kim Craiton
Jeff Leal, Gerry Martiniuk
Paul Miller, Bill Murdoch
Michael Prue, Lou Rinaldi
Tony Ruprecht
Clerks / Greffiers: Trevor Day (pro tem.), Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vic Dhillon
Vic Dhillon, Cheri DiNovo
Rick Johnson, Sylvia Jones
Jean-Marc Lalonde, Ted McMeekin
Shafiq Qaadri, Khalil Ramal
Elizabeth Witmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions / Comité
spécial de la santé mentale et des dépendances**

Chair / Président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott
Bas Balkissoon, Christine Elliott
Kevin Daniel Flynn, France Gélinas
Helena Jaczek, Sylvia Jones
Jeff Leal, Liz Sandals
Maria Van Bommel
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

Continued from back cover

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

Canadian Navy

Mrs. Joyce Savoline 1041

Goldman Sachs

Mr. Peter Tabuns 1042

Good Companions Seniors' Centre

Mr. Yasir Naqvi 1042

Garry Bachman

Mr. John O'Toole 1042

Ontario artists

Mr. Rick Johnson 1042

Government accountability

Ms. Lisa MacLeod 1043

Canadian Association of Wound Care

Ms. Helena Jaczek 1043

March of Dimes

Mr. Glen R. Murray 1043

10 Days Across Canada

Mr. Jim Brownell 1043

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES / RAPPORTS DES COMITÉS

Standing Committee on Regulations and Private

Bills

Mr. Michael Prue 1044

Report adopted 1044

MOTIONS

Private members' public business

Hon. Gerry Phillips 1044

Motion agreed to 1044

Hon. Gerry Phillips 1044

Motion agreed to 1044

George Kerr

Hon. James J. Bradley 1044

Mr. Gilles Bisson 1045

Mrs. Joyce Savoline 1046

Mr. Norman W. Sterling 1046

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters) 1047

National Day of Mourning

Hon. Peter Fonseca 1047

Mr. John O'Toole 1048

Mr. Peter Kormos 1048

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Ontario pharmacists

Mr. Joe Dickson 1049

Ontario pharmacists

Mr. Lou Rinaldi 1049

Multiple sclerosis

Ms. Helena Jaczek 1050

Ontario pharmacists

Mr. Yasir Naqvi 1050

Reconstructive surgery

Mr. Mario Sergio 1050

OPPOSITION DAY / JOUR DE L'OPPOSITION

Wind turbines

Mr. John Yakabuski 1050

Ms. Lisa MacLeod 1051

Mr. Yasir Naqvi 1052

Mr. Toby Barrett 1053

Mr. Phil McNeely 1053

Ms. Sylvia Jones 1054

Mr. Ted Arnott 1055

Mr. Norman W. Sterling 1056

Mr. Jim Wilson 1056

Ms. Helena Jaczek 1056

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer 1057

Mrs. Julia Munro 1058

Mr. Peter Tabuns 1058

Mr. Kim Craitor 1062

Motion negatived 1063

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Wednesday 28 April 2010 / Mercredi 28 avril 2010

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Pension Benefits Amendment Act, 2010, Bill 236, Mr. Duncan / Loi de 2010 modifiant la Loi sur les régimes de retraite, projet de loi 236, M. Duncan

Mr. Peter Kormos.....	1021
Mr. John O'Toole.....	1023
Mr. Howard Hampton.....	1024
Mr. Wayne Arthurs.....	1024
Mr. Gerry Martiniuk.....	1024
Mr. Peter Kormos.....	1024
Mr. John O'Toole.....	1025
Mr. Rosario Marchese.....	1028
Hon. James J. Bradley.....	1028
Mrs. Julia Munro.....	1028
Mr. John O'Toole.....	1028
Mr. Rosario Marchese.....	1029
Third reading debate deemed adjourned.....	1031

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mr. Peter Tabuns.....	1031
Mr. Jeff Leal.....	1031
Hon. James J. Bradley.....	1031
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne.....	1031
Mr. Dave Levac.....	1031
Hon. Peter Fonseca.....	1031
The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters).....	1031

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Wind turbines

Mr. John Yakabuski.....	1031
Hon. Dalton McGuinty.....	1031

Wind turbines

Mrs. Joyce Savoline.....	1032
Hon. Brad Duguid.....	1032

Workplace safety

Mr. Peter Kormos.....	1033
Hon. Peter Fonseca.....	1033

Public transit

Ms. Cheri DiNovo.....	1034
Hon. Dalton McGuinty.....	1034

Curriculum

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer.....	1034
Hon. Dalton McGuinty.....	1034

Social services

Mr. Peter Tabuns.....	1035
Hon. Laurel C. Broten.....	1035
Hon. Peter Fonseca.....	1035

Pharmacists

Mr. David Oraziotti.....	1036
Hon. Deborah Matthews.....	1036

Taxation

Ms. Sylvia Jones.....	1036
Hon. John Wilkinson.....	1036

Full-day kindergarten

Mr. Rosario Marchese.....	1037
Hon. Leona Dombrowsky.....	1037

Taxation

Mr. David Zimmer.....	1037
Hon. John Wilkinson.....	1037

Pediatric forensic pathology inquiry

Mr. Ted Chudleigh.....	1038
Hon. Rick Bartolucci.....	1038

Taxation

Mr. Michael Prue.....	1038
Hon. John Wilkinson.....	1038

Highway construction

Mr. Jeff Leal.....	1039
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne.....	1039

Coroner's inquests

Mr. Garfield Dunlop.....	1039
Hon. Rick Bartolucci.....	1040

Pharmacists

Mr. Howard Hampton.....	1040
Hon. Deborah Matthews.....	1040

Tourism and culture

Mrs. Liz Sandals.....	1041
Hon. Michael Chan.....	1041

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mrs. Joyce Savoline.....	1041
Ms. Helena Jaczek.....	1041
Mr. Rick Johnson.....	1041
Ms. Lisa MacLeod.....	1041

Continued on inside back cover

CA25N
x1
-023

Government
Publication



No. 24

N° 24

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly of Ontario

Second Session, 39th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

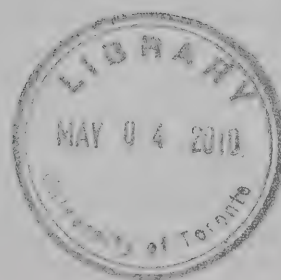
Deuxième session, 39^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Thursday 29 April 2010

Jeudi 29 avril 2010



Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

<http://www.ontla.on.ca/>

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7410 or 325-3708.

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7410 ou le 325-3708.

Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services
Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



Service du Journal des débats et d'interprétation
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400; télécopieur, 416-325-7430
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 29 April 2010

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 29 avril 2010

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the Baha'i prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

STATUTE LAW

AMENDMENT ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 MODIFIANT DES LOIS

EN CE QUI CONCERNE

L'ENSEIGNEMENT POSTSECONDAIRE

Mr. Phillips, on behalf of Mr. Milloy, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 43, An Act to amend the Post-secondary Education Choice and Excellence Act, 2000, the Private Career Colleges Act, 2005 and the Ontario College of Art & Design Act, 2002 / Projet de loi 43, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 favorisant le choix et l'excellence au niveau post-secondaire, la Loi de 2005 sur les collèges privés d'enseignement professionnel et la Loi de 2002 sur l'École d'art et de design de l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I'll be sharing the vast majority of my time with the member from Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: I think, after that mercifully brief introduction, I'm getting the majority of the time.

Interjection: The vast majority.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: The vast majority.

Our government has long recognized that investing in education and training is absolutely critical to the success of our province. With Ontario's economy undergoing some huge structural changes, our investments have never been more important. Advantages of the past—low wages, a low dollar, cheap commodities—are becoming far less important as we move to compete internationally.

Experts tell us that some 70% of new jobs require a higher education and that if we want those jobs, we've got to be smarter, we've got to be better trained and we've got to be better educated than the next guy. That is why our government continues to make education our highest priority.

In a recent speech from the throne, our government unveiled Open Ontario, a new five-year plan to create

new opportunities for jobs and growth, and investing in education is a critical part of that plan.

The late President John F. Kennedy used to say there is no better measure of our progress as a nation than our progress in education. He was right. After all, it is today's students who will go on to become the entrepreneurs who will build tomorrow's knowledge-based economy: the dreamers who will tackle the world's toughest problems and the innovators who will turn exciting new ideas into things that have the power to change our very lives. We believe that every qualified Ontarian who wants to go to college or university should have that opportunity.

Open Ontario includes raising the number of Ontarians with a post-secondary education credential to 70%. To reach this goal, our plan includes a provision to build 20,000 more spaces at our colleges and universities this fall. We're going to create a new Ontario Online Institute that will offer students a new option for higher learning in the increasingly digitized world of the 21st century. Another part of the plan is to shine a spotlight on Ontario's outstanding post-secondary education system, so that in that spotlight we can make our province the destination for those who are seeking higher learning.

We currently have more than 37,000 international students enrolled in Ontario colleges and universities. We will open our doors to the world and we will increase international enrolment by 50% over the next five years. President Obama was recently quoted as saying, "Those nations that out-educate us will soon be out-competing us." I think he's right. By encouraging more foreign students to come to Ontario, we can build new international relationships and increase our competitiveness.

To continue to attract those students and to ensure that the people of Ontario have the best possible post-secondary education system, we need to put our very best foot forward. We need to work diligently to protect the quality of our post-secondary education system. That is why this week—this very week—our government introduced the Post-secondary Education Statute Law Amendment Act, 2010, which moves forward on three different fronts. Let me explain: Through this act, we have proposed amendments to the Post-secondary Education Choice and Excellence Act, 2000; the Private Career Colleges Act, 2005; and the Ontario College of Art & Design Act, 2002.

Ontario is moving to protect Ontario's reputation for excellence in post-secondary education, both at home and abroad. Our action will assure students that post-secondary programs offered here in Ontario are of the highest quality and meet our standards of excellence. Our pro-

posed amendments to the Post-secondary Education Choice and Excellence Act, or PSECE, would, if passed, protect both international and Ontario students. The PSECE Act came into effect in 2001 to expand access to degree programs, improve student protection and implement quality assurance for new degree programs. The act allows private institutions from inside and outside of Ontario and public out-of-province institutions and colleges of applied arts and technology to apply to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities to offer a degree program. Previously, colleges of applied arts and technology and private institutions located in Ontario could not apply to offer degrees in our great province.

0910

The act created the Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board, or PEQAB, as it's affectionately known, which has implemented rigorous quality controls and has been successful in protecting Ontario students from degree mills since that time.

But we've experienced an increase in organizations challenging the Post-secondary Education Choice and Excellence Act. They are challenging our ability to ensure the quality of our post-secondary education brand. Currently, there are no options provided in the act for financial penalties. The only enforcement available is prosecution under the Provincial Offences Act, a quasi-criminal proceeding. We believe that we need more and stronger tools of enforcement, much like the changes we have made to our Private Career Colleges Act.

If passed, the proposed amendments would strengthen the ability of the government to shut down unscrupulous and unauthorized educational organizations and prevent them from taking advantage of international and Ontario students. Our proposed amendments would allow the government to impose financial penalties and restraining and compliance orders against unauthorized degree-granting institutions.

Another key amendment would, if passed, allow us to reduce the red tape for publicly assisted colleges and other institutions by making the application process for consent to offer a degree program more cost-effective and less time-consuming, and that has got to be good news for all of us.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Oh my God, it's just so good.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: I appreciate the affirmation from the bench opposite. That one who's so knowledgeable, who says without any hesitation, as an immediate reaction to the words I uttered, how good this act is—I appreciate that.

Currently, the minister must refer every application for consent to the Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board. The minister cannot make decisions early in the process, even when the proposed new program is an unjustified duplication of existing programs or when few job opportunities actually exist for graduates of that particular program. It just doesn't make sense. That's why we want to change it.

In addition, the act also does not provide any choice about requiring a quality review by PEQAB, even in

cases where a quality assurance review has already been done by another reputable body. Our proposed amendments could and would reduce this potential duplication.

As well, we are proposing amendments to the act to define and clarify ambiguous terminology such as "degree," "distance education" and "educational institution" in order to clearly identify the activities that are subject to the Post-secondary Education Choice and Excellence Act.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: That should do it.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: Thank you again for that wonderful affirmation. I knew, coming in this morning, that the honourable member opposite would be nodding in total agreement with the thrust of this bill. I do appreciate his enthusiasm. He's a good friend who knows post-secondary education very well.

Anyhow, I've noted that our Private Career Colleges Act has strong enforcement measures that will allow us to finally protect students.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: There you go: "We didn't do it right five years ago; we're going to do it right today."

Mr. Ted McMeekin: The honourable member is right: We are going to do it right today. I appreciate that. That is thanks to a number of changes in our approach to the private career colleges sector over the last few years.

We brought in the Private Career Colleges Act, we established the training completion assurance fund and most recently we did introduce financial penalties. We've doubled the number of inspectors from six to 12, we've appointed new provincial offences officers with the power to issue court summons and we've introduced financial penalties for private career colleges that break the law. We're also reaching out to students through a public awareness campaign to ensure that students understand the importance of choosing a registered private career college and an approved program, so they get the high-quality education they deserve.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Make sure they know: Buyer beware; it's not our problem.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: Protecting consumers, particularly those in post-secondary education, as I'm sure my good friend the wonderful Minister of Consumer Services from the great riding of Hamilton Mountain would appreciate more than most.

We're also working on a number of fronts to enhance quality and accountability across the private career college sector.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: There's more?

Mr. Ted McMeekin: Of course there's more.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Hold on; let me put on my earpiece.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: You wouldn't want to miss this. There are two key measures that I think will take the sector to a whole new level. Are you ready?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Yes. I'm taking notes.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: I noticed that. You might want to do a thesis on this one day; it's such an important move.

Today, I want to highlight proposed amendments that will further strengthen our enforcement of this act. If passed, these amendments would raise the maximum financial penalties for provincial offences from \$25,000 to \$50,000 for individuals, and from \$100,000 to \$250,000 for corporations. These penalties would be in keeping with other consumer protection legislation such as the Consumer Protection Act, 2002. This would help us improve student protection and the quality of private career colleges and programs.

Mr. Mario Sergio: Hear, hear.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: "Hear, hear" is right. That is an important step—very important. We are going to compete in the global economy, and Ontario is going to win, because we're going to have the most highly educated and skilled citizenry in the world right here. I see my honourable colleague over there is nodding in agreement. It's very, very good to see that.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Parkdale—High Park.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: Parkdale—High Park—how could I forget?

You know, people from your riding have been lining up for days to tell us how excited they are about this bill.

Mr. Dave Levac: The galleries are full.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: That's because they're so confident that our government has this right.

The member from Brant, of course, has an international reputation for his educational acumen, and he has been very helpful in terms of moving this forward.

On the Ontario College of Art and Design, the third part of our act covers proposed amendments to the Ontario College of Art and Design Act. OCAD—I know this, because one of my daughters was involved with OCAD—is one of the leading art and design—

Mr. Mike Colle: My daughter too.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: Mr. Colle's daughter as well.

Mr. Mike Colle: Bianca.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: Bianca Colle.

0920

Mr. Michael A. Brown: And Monte Kwinter's a graduate.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: I didn't know that. Did you know Monte Kwinter was a graduate of OCAD?

Interjection: Yes, I did.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: I knew he had that artistic flair, but I wasn't quite sure where it came from.

Interjections.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: The member from York Centre.

Interjection.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: He'd be welcome to do this speech, I can assure you.

Mr. Jeff Leal: You've got the member all choked up here, Rosario.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: It's such a great day, I've got to tell you.

OCAD is one of the leading art and design institutions in all of Canada.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Let's take a pause and have a drink here.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: I think I should, yes.

With more than 3,500 students, the Ontario College of Art and Design is one of the largest professional art and design institutions in all of North America.

As Ontario strives to further develop an innovative economy, OCAD is an important player in supporting our goals in developing leading-edge innovations. OCAD has forged strong ties with industry leaders in the creative, information and communication technology sectors. It is a key player in supporting Ontario's innovative economy.

Known for its innovation and links with a variety of arts and technology sectors, OCAD is producing high-quality graduates with the skills and competencies to meet the demands of the new economy.

Ontario is proposing amendments to the Ontario College of Art & Design Act that will finally give OCAD university status as an institution.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Finally.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: Right on, member from High Park. Thank you for that.

OCAD has been able to grant a bachelor's and master's degree since 2002, and the new amendments would reflect the academic evolution of the institution.

If passed, these amendments would change the name of OCAD to the Ontario College of Art and Design University. Changes to the act would also establish a university senate and appropriately amend the powers of the board of governors.

In conclusion, our Open Ontario plan recognizes the importance of post-secondary education in creating more opportunities for jobs and growth to compete in the global marketplace.

Ontario's post-secondary education system is recognized for the quality of programs offered by our great colleges and universities. We are a leader in quality assurance for our post-secondary education system. This is a reputation we value highly and are committed to protecting.

Mr. Mario Sergio: We are proud.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: We are indeed proud. Ontario needs to act now, out of a sense of pride, out of a sense of hopefulness for the future, and with the certain knowledge that we can compete against anybody in the world. We just have to make sure that our most precious resource—our people—have the tools to get the job done.

Interjection: Determination.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: We are absolutely determined to act now to ensure that the Ontario brand remains strong.

I urge all members of this House to support the proposed Post-secondary Education Statute Law Amendment Act, with its amendments, secure in the knowledge that this would strengthen our ability to maintain the integrity and quality of Ontario's post-secondary education system both at home and abroad. Isn't that why we're here and isn't that what this place is all about?

Thank you so much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm pleased to rise and make a few comments at the beginning of this reading of the bill. There's one thing I want to put on the record: I actually had an opportunity to listen to quite a bit of the member's speech, and I'm very concerned about some of the comments I heard last night when I visited the hospitality reception room for the career colleges of Ontario—a lot of private career colleges are here. One group in particular, the Northern Ontario Welding College—they've been in Barrie for the last decade, and they've done a remarkable job training people in welding. They feel somewhat intimidated by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities about some of the actions it has taken. I only want to say that I hope, when we complete this debate and go on to committee hearings, that people who might be affected in a negative way by this particular piece of legislation—that they will, in fact, listen to possible amendments.

You have to remember that a lot of the private career colleges we have are operating with very little government assistance, and they're doing a good job training people in the province of Ontario. Any time we can train someone and put them to work, that's a very positive step. I had an opportunity to talk to only a couple of the people who had display booths at the reception last night, but both of them felt that the government wasn't addressing some of their concerns.

I also noticed that there were virtually no government members at the private career colleges reception, and I'd like to know why.

Anyhow, those are my comments. I'm hoping there will be positive amendments coming forward on this, and I hope the government will address in the debate or in amendments to the bill any negative comments we hear from anyone.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I listened very, very closely to the comments by my friend from Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale—that's another big riding, I'm telling you—and I'm going to be as critical of his remarks as I was of the remarks by the minister yesterday, because I think we have a system that we cannot be too proud of. I know that you say you're proud of the reputation you've got. The Ombudsman wasn't too proud of the reputation you have. In his dissection of a number of problems he has studied, the ministry has nothing to be proud of.

You talk about being a leader in quality assurance. You're not. You talk about moving to protect Ontario's reputation. Yes, you must, because our reputation is not that strong. You talk about the Private Career Colleges Act having strong enforcement measures to allow us to protect students—at least the minister did yesterday. If indeed there were strong enforcement measures, why has he not applied them to those rogue institutions that have been set up and have cheated many students of a year or two of tuition and a year or two of their lives, when many of these institutions are not registered?

The member from Simcoe North talks about some of these private colleges being intimidated or afraid. Well, if they're registered and they have followed the quality assurance measures that are requested of them, there's no problem. And if these private institutions are not registered, that is against the law.

I'll have more opportunity to speak to this in a half-hour or so.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: First of all, I want to congratulate my colleague the member from Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale for his wonderful speech about the importance of amending this bill to make sure that all the people who come from everywhere to study in Ontario will be protected, that Ontario is open for international students and also that when they come and study, whatever college they study in should be accredited and looked after very well. The importance of this amendment and of Bill 43 is to create a protection mechanism.

Also, the member from Simcoe–Grey talked about yesterday's event, and that there was nobody from the government side. Yes, there were a lot of members. I went.

0930

Mr. Jim Brownell: Absolutely. I was there.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Yes, I was there, and many people went yesterday. We were in and out. It's not about this. We believe that everyone in the province of Ontario, everyone who registers, everyone who has a legitimate concern should come to this place and voice their concern. This is what's important about this place: It's open for all the people from across the province to come and talk to us. That's why we're here: to listen to the people and address their concerns.

The most important thing is education—how important it is when you allow people from across the globe to come to Ontario, learn and not just get an academic education but also learn about the culture, the traditions, so that when they go back, they can create some kind of a special tie with Canada and Ontario, and maybe create trade missions.

I think it's important, and that's why the most important thing is how we can create a mechanism, and how we can allow the colleges and universities to update and upgrade their capacity to be able to absorb those massive numbers of students coming from international backgrounds.

Also, the most important thing is to cut the red tape and make it more accessible, with special protections and guarantees for all the people who want to come to Ontario.

I want to congratulate the member from Ancaster—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. Further questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I have listened carefully. In fact, the content of the remarks by the member were engaging and entertaining. I'm very disappointed that the minister isn't here.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: I shouldn't say that. The minister—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Order. I'd just remind the honourable members that we don't comment on whether someone is here or not here. They may very well be in their offices, working hard, or in committee.

The honourable member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: That was inadvertent and I apologize for saying that.

I'm just saying that this bill is pretty significant, given the context of what was in the budget speech and the expansion of the pressures on the system. This was in the budget speech that was read by the minister. I'll be making comments on that in a very few minutes, with the indulgence of the House.

The member did speak of the importance of some of these changes that were, I believe, in direct response to André Marin's reports on the inaction that I believe has precipitated this bill.

Our critic is predisposed to listen closely today on this, because I'll be sort of speaking earlier than I should be.

The comments by the member were valid. I'll make a couple of comments that say that there are a lot of good things in the bill and we're going to listen. We certainly hope it will go to committee.

With that, we'll wait until my time to speak.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member for Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale has up to two minutes for his response.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: I want to thank my honourable colleagues from Simcoe North, Trinity—Spadina, of course the great riding of London—Fanshawe, and Durham for their comments.

This bill is basically about three things. It's about responding to challenges and creating opportunities, it's about enhancing quality, and it's about protecting students. Those are three pretty important imperatives.

The honourable member from Trinity—Spadina talked about quality. I'm reminded that Aristotle once said—

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: A good Greek.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: A good Greek, says my honourable colleague from Hamilton Mountain, who knows good Greeks.

Aristotle once said that if you want to know if the shoe fits, you have to ask the person who wears it, not the person who made it. In that context, we do very well. You talk to students about how they view their post-secondary education, and it's virtually universally positive. There are studies to show that. We of course have one of the highest post-secondary graduation rates in the western world, if not the highest.

We're going to move ahead. Of course we're going to listen to any thoughtful amendments. Our government is all about listening to thoughtful amendments so that we can enhance any legislation.

We're not here to fear the future, but to shape it. In order to do that, we need to hold fast to the best of our

past and race, as this bill does, to embrace the very best of our future.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: Mr. Speaker, I would like to seek unanimous consent to stand down our lead speech.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Is it agreed that the lead be stood down? Agreed.

Mr. John O'Toole: I might just mention directly that our critic on this has given me as much help as he possibly can in the short time that we've been allowed. In fact, he'll be listening to every remark, because he's sitting in the chair.

I want to start by saying first of all, I'm sort of a product of lifelong learning. In fact, it has taken me longer to learn than most people here, I suppose. But I mean that quite sincerely. I attended three or four different universities and graduated from two of them. Now, the deal here is that all of us, including the young people here today, should realize that we're in an environment of lifelong learning. It is institutional to some extent, and it's coincidental to some extent.

If you look at access to information today, the virtual world of information—Google and the Internet—the piracy that occurs, plagiarizing etc., is profound. I can say in our own family I have a couple of nephews who have Ph.D.s from Canadian universities and American universities. My youngest daughter just graduated with a master's degree from a university that I believe is in Scotland. She got her undergraduate degree here in Ontario. I'm so proud of how my wife is an educator, a retired teacher. Education was the primary goal in our lives, and I believe for many new Canadians, it's the primary goal. They come here because there is a rich opportunity and a rich environment.

I also think locally: My riding of Durham is home to one of Ontario's newest universities, the University of Ontario Institute of Technology. I want to thank Dr. Polonsky, who generated the enthusiasm and the conceptual idea to develop what was a college into a new university, and now we have the Durham equivalent, UOIT. Dr. Ronald Bordessa, the president there, comes from a background at York University, and I think as well from Royal Roads in British Columbia.

We also have Durham College, which is a technical college, a quasi-university, I guess, that works with universities. Don Lovisa is the president there, and he is bringing that into the new world of the new generation of energy and energy technologists—that program. They've instituted in the midst of the building some of the infrastructure for renewable energy right on-site for hands-on training and learning.

I think all of our communities are really committed to partnering, whether it's a college with a university—and the crossover programs today are very important. I think recognizing credits in the college sector, to transition into the university sector, is important. Many university graduates today with an arts degree go to college to get some practical learning to apply to the workplace.

I think it's very important: Success today, it's often said, is a knowledge-based economy. In that, it's global. We cannot be isolationists. Let's be realistic. There are two or three books that were written recently, and I refer to them often. I think Richard Florida's book on the creative culture is important, about the jobs of the future. I ask, what are the jobs of the future? We see the erosion and loss of jobs in manufacturing cascading out of this country, and we see the problems in the typical, traditional economies of northern Ontario. Those northern Ontario economies based on resources, whether it's pulp or minerals in the ground, show that the economy there has to change.

The interesting part of this whole debate on the revolution of colleges and universities and knowledge is that you don't have to be in Toronto or Ottawa or Waterloo. You can actually learn virtually. Many of the programs today—in fact, when I was still working 15 years ago, I was in a program working on my master's degree in mechanical engineering at Northwestern University. I never got the degree. I finished the first four courses, I believe it was, in statistics and stuff like that. But it was all done virtually. You went to the Northwestern campus for a week or something and then you came out and studied online in collaborative mode, learning with other students on problem-solving. That's the reality today.

0940

I went to the University of Toronto—that's where I graduated from—but my point is this: The way we learn today is profoundly different. Now, I don't know whether it addresses this, but in their budget—I wish I had more time. I'd like to have the lead on this if I could, but I know the Speaker would not allow that because it's his job.

But in the budget on page 60, Open Ontario's goal is to raise Ontario's post-secondary attainment rates to 70%. A very laudable goal; we would support that objective. You've got to keep the standards high. If the number's so important, don't lower the standards. If you want to say you've got 70%, how do you compare on some of the Euclid tests and Descartes tests and all these other tests that test the high quality of math, science and real knowledge?

It says the first step is that the budget will provide \$310 million in new funding for 20,000 new spaces in colleges and universities this year. I question whether or not that's enough money. I'm not asking them to spend; I'm asking them to think outside the box. The reason I say that is because learning in a virtual university is not a negative thought. The quality has to be there.

Here's a good example: MIT, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, probably one of the most prestigious universities. If you read Friedman's book *The World Is Flat*—and he has a second book now, *Flat, Hot and Crowded*, which is pulling together globalization as well as global warming—what they say there is that the most patents that were issued, for the first time in history, last year, were issued in India at Bangalore University.

They graduate more electrical engineers in India than all of Canada and the United States combined. That's the competition globally. Get with the game.

Now, if you were going to get a lecture in advanced theoretical physics, where would you like to get that lecture from? I'd want it from the very best practical theoretical physicist in the world, and that's possible today by conferencing and visual interaction by computer. My children live in three different countries: Australia, England and the Isle of Man. I say this all the time: We speak to them almost every day online, and to our grandchildren, on Skype. Corporations today have virtual contact throughout the world: online, real-time. When the president of some large company speaks, he speaks from some country to their international partners. That's the world today. Let's get over it, that it's some direct institution. I agree with the sentimental values and the importance of the socialization and real contact with real people at the university, totally agree with that, totally understand, especially for undergraduate students. But for graduate students, they want the very best.

I'm going to read one example of a paper this morning. In the media this morning there were a couple of articles on this which I think were very appropriate, and this complements something in the bill. There's a particular section in the bill which I think is important and necessary in a knowledge-based economy. Here's what it says, and this is from CBC News: "Private Universities Target of Ontario's Crackdown"—that's one part of it. It says:

"Currently, Ph.D. students can start the process of acquiring permanent resident status in Canada only if they already have a permanent job offer." The changes announced will do the following. This is as reported by Mike Crawley of CBC News, who "spoke with Irada Ibrahim-Zada, a Ph.D. student in the U of T's Department of Laboratory Medicine and Pathobiology who is from Azerbaijan. She is doing research about why certain cancer drugs do or don't work well with different patients depending on their genes.

"Ibrahim-Zada said removing the rule that requires a permanent job before applying for permanent resident status will boost her chances of being able to stay and work" here "in Ontario."

That's ultimately what we want. We want that. That is a provision in this bill which I would support. I would encourage our leader, Tim Hudak, and our critic, Jim Wilson, to support that.

She goes on to say, "Right now, knowing that I can graduate from a Ph.D. program and directly apply as a provincial nominee makes my life easier."

New Canadians are going to bring new growth to this province, and that needs to be supported. We attract—based on what? I think we attract them—we've heard for the last couple of decades that new Canadians are coming here with Ph.D.s or engineering degrees and driving taxis. We need to change that. We need to change it and make full use of all of the skills and knowledge that are

here. It will pressure our institutions to respect and respond.

The budget speech I mentioned went on to say, and I'm going to quote from that again: "Tens of millions of families around the globe want what Ontario offers—a quality post-secondary education that leads to a good job and a secure future." Who doesn't want that? My five children do; that's why they're in different countries. They go where the action is. It's a global deal. If you want to be with the best, you've got to run with the best.

Here's what it says. The minister said that we are aggressively promoting Ontario's—I'm not sure the word "aggressively" is the right word. It should be based on quality, and that will be the eventual outcome. We are aggressively promoting "Ontario's post-secondary schools abroad and increase international enrolment by 50% ... guaranteeing spaces for qualified Ontario students." Wait a minute here—a 50% increase; \$310 million. That's not nearly enough money.

Do you know what this is about? Tuition for foreign students is double or triple the regular student tuition. It's a money-maker. Let's call it what it is. It really is. I say that not to be cynical or critical. Let's say what it is. They're going after the market, like New Zealand and Australia are doing as well. I should add that New Zealand and Australia, where my daughter lives, are doing the same thing. There's money in it, big-time money.

These students come, they pay tuition in the hundreds, maybe thousands of dollars—Ph.D. and graduate students—maybe hundreds of thousands. They live here, they buy here, they buy groceries, they rent, they do things, they bolster the economy. What's good about the bill is they're going to allow them to stay as permanent residents and bring their skills and knowledge here.

I want to say also that everyone here, I think, realizes everything I've said. I'm just putting it on the record. What's really important, though, is to put some context around the real purpose of the bill, as the member said this morning. Opportunity, quality and protecting students were the three prerequisites, I think.

I think it's very important to look at the work done by the Ombudsman, André Marin. He has issued two reports on this. There's work to be done, and this bill reacts to some of that.

The goal is to increase the number of Ontario students, as I said, with post-secondary education to 70%—watch the quality numbers. Don't just get caught up with the numbers. Let's measure the quality.

Some of the academics argue with this measurement of quality. Let's put ourselves up to the world's best. It's like the Olympics. How successful, how wonderful to see our Canadian athletes in the Winter Olympics. What a terrific inspiration for all of us. We can do it. The leadership has to start here. You can't force it on the students. You have to show the rewards are there for excellence. In fact, my belief is—and I'm on my own, saying this; I would encourage our leader, Tim Hudak, to say this—I think the top students' tuition should be free.

Interjection: How come you're saying you're alone?

Mr. John O'Toole: Well, basically, you and I are the only ones here.

The truth is, though, I would say the top students in my day and age, when they were an Ontario scholar—there were two Ontario scholars in my grade 13. Both of them have Ph.D.s today. They were brilliant. In fact, they knew the answer to the question when the lecturer put the equation on the board. One of them is head of fine art, I think, at Carleton. The other is a physics teacher at Queen's, I believe. Today, there are two pages of Ontario scholars, from every high school.

I don't know whether they're—I put it that the kids are smarter, perhaps. There's certainly a lot more information around, and more easily accessed.

0950

Here is the deal: Even the ones who get the award for top student—I'd be giving them a significant scholarship. They used to give \$500 when I was back in school; they get nothing today—maybe \$100 or something—and tuition in Ontario is the highest in Canada. If you really want to do something about increasing access, make it affordable; make the loans affordable; have an income-contingent loan repayment plan—some real plans for this 70% goal. We don't want them graduating with \$50,000 in debt or more. It's unacceptable. This is our future. We're going to depend on them all achieving their best potential in the least obstructive way.

What André Marin said was this: While these goals—of 50% and 70%—are commendable, do these increases come at the expense of students and graduates such as has been the case at Cambrian College and Bestech Academy? I'll mention more about that in a minute; it's in the Ombudsman's reports. He has two reports: Too Cool For School, which was introduced in July 2009, and Too Cool For School Too, in August 2009. He's got it. He gets it. I'm not sure if this fixes it. It does give the minister much more authority, I'll say that.

The minister calls for stronger tools of enforcement, yet Marin goes on to say, in a scathing report by the Ombudsman—here's what he said:

"Despite the fact that it is illegal to operate a private ... college that is not registered with the ministry, a considerable number of unregistered training facilities exist in Ontario, presenting a risk to unwary consumers"—who are students. "The Ministry is fully cognizant of this reality. However, it does not vigorously pursue information about or enforcement against rogue operators." That's our Ombudsman.

They fired the Ombudsman. André Marin is too direct. I think he has been one of the best Ombudsmen we've had. He's quite outspoken—I will say that—but that's his job, to comment with facts and evidence.

Here's what it really comes down to: Looking at this again, this is a report from April 26. This is very current, and I need to speak quickly here. Here's what's actually happening: "The institution"—that we're talking about—"which is headquartered at Prestige Restaurant in Hawkesbury, Ont."—what's it called? Wait a minute; it's

called Hawkesbury University, and it operates at a restaurant in Hawkesbury, Ontario. I've been to Hawkesbury. I lived in Quebec for a while. I used to drive through Hawkesbury on the way home.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: They have a university?

Mr. John O'Toole: Yeah, it's in a restaurant.

It "has no approvals from the Ontario government to do business in the province as a university or as a private career college. Earlier this month, the province issued a restraining order under the Private Career Colleges Act"—which is an existing act; it was in 2005 that that act came in—"barring the unregistered school from advertising its unapproved programs.

"Owner Ashraf Hossain Siddiky had been advertising the school on a bright yellow website, which remains up despite the restraining order handed down April 19. Efforts to reach Mr. Siddiky were unsuccessful." Can you imagine? He's probably out of the country.

"The ministry says the website was tweaked during the investigation to say the school was 'proposed' and that it is 'not yet operating.'"

What's happening here is—this is a real case; I'm not making it up. This is in the—I hope it's not the Toronto Star, because they're usually pretty good to the Liberals. They never say anything critical, anyway. We call it the Liberal briefing notes. This is actually in the Globe and Mail, which is a very balanced media piece as well.

But this is about enforcement. What does the actual bill say? Well, I have a copy of it here. I haven't had time to read it because it was just issued Tuesday. I have most of it read, though. I assure you that I look at them; I don't just kind of go over what—the ministry gives these guys over here the speech, and we saw that this morning, and they read it. That's the end of it. Some of them might go to the briefing. I think Mr. McMeekin is probably the parliamentary assistant for something. I'm sure he's going to make sure that—I want to see how many amendments and hearings are actually listened to, because our critic, Mr. Wilson, was on the board of governors for the University of Toronto, and I know that he will bring some substance and content to his observations.

Here's what it says: "The inspection section of the act, section 9, is amended to more closely parallel the inspection section in the Private Career Colleges Act, 2005"—I just mentioned that—"and the act is amended by adding provisions dealing with administrative monetary penalties" etc.

It goes on to say: "The provincial offence penalties are increased from \$25,000 to \$50,000 for individuals and from \$100,000 to \$250,000 for corporations." This guy in Hawkesbury—a quarter of a million dollars will shut him down in no time flat.

The point here is that we want a knowledge-based economy. We want the best possible thing. I think that some of the things they're doing here are laudable, commendable and supportable. Our leader, Tim Hudak, is big on jobs and the economy. That's his whole deal: opportunities for young people who will pull us into the future where Canada can be the leader.

A lot of this is missing. A lot of it's not here. The ink isn't dry. We're going to require it to go to committee, and you can count on it that we will be there, making sure that we have the right tools in the right place at the right time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: As always, it's interesting to listen to the member from Durham. He brings passion to the place. There are a couple of areas where we could agree with him, from the New Democratic Party; just a couple. One is the sorry, sorry state of post-secondary education in this province right now under seven years of Liberal watch. Here are the facts: We are now 10th out of 10 in per capita funding for post-secondary students. We are now the highest-priced place to get a post-secondary degree out of all the provinces and we have the highest level of indebtedness upon graduation.

Now, where does it look better? Well, everywhere, just about. We are increasingly becoming like the United States: We have students graduating with \$50,000, \$100,000, \$150,000 worth of debt. Contrast this, might I say, with most of Europe, in particular those social democratic countries where, guess what? People are always astounded when I say this: Post-secondary education is free. That's what we should be aiming for here, free post-secondary education so that it's open to everyone. The member from Durham said, "It should be free for the best students." Well, it is free for the best students in many jurisdictions in the world. I mean, imagine, students here. You should be in the streets. You should be out in front of Queen's Park. You should be demanding not only a reduction in tuition, but real steps towards the goal, which is to make it accessible; to make it open and accessible to everyone—i.e., free.

I remember a wonderful article in NOW Magazine. Its title was, "Did You Know that Your Professor Makes Less than You Do?" That's the other ugly secret about post-secondary education: Professors here are being treated worse than workers in other professions and make less, sometimes, per hour than baristas at Starbucks.

Here is the educational system in Ontario. This is the reality. This bill isn't going to do much to change that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted McMeekin: In response to the honourable member from Durham, I want to offer a couple of observations. Thomas Friedman, in his book *The World Is Flat*, pointed out to us that in a world where you can purchase resources, borrow capital and copy technology, the only real advantage any country has is, in fact, the degree to which their citizenry is educated, is trained and can be a competitive workforce in the global economy.

The member opposite suggested that today, international students want to go where the action is. We agree with that, and I guess what we're trying to do in this bill and in some of the other initiatives that we've taken is make Ontario the place where the action is; make Ontario the destination of choice so that those wonderful

international students who want to come—we're making it easier for them to come, study and stay—can contribute to building a stronger, healthier and more caring and prosperous Ontario. Those who come and study and go home can become our partners in the economic situation that the global economy is all a big part of today.

The reference to student aid was interesting. I just want to say that in addition to freezing tuition for a couple of years, you may recall that students in Ontario have access to the most generous student support in the country. We've doubled our investments in student aid and tripled the number of grants available. In fact, independent studies have shown that of all the provinces in Canada, students graduating from Ontario are doing the best in terms of low debt. They're also doing the best in terms of access to student support, and I think we can be proud of that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

1000

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I want to commend the member from Durham for his presentation on Bill 42. I wasn't in the chamber when the discussion started, but I came in and I heard the member speaking very passionately about the education system in general. In fact, I think a couple of times he mentioned that he wasn't sure that he was right on the topic of the bill, but he wanted to have some input into the system in general, the bigger picture. I very much appreciated that. He mentioned here this morning that if you read the bill—and maybe not everyone has read the bill. As I was driving home yesterday, I was listening to the radio. They kept playing this clip on the radio. If I heard it once, I heard it 25 times. It was the Premier of the province of Ontario saying on the education bill and the changes that were being made, "It's 206 pages. To be frank,"—I'm not sure if the word was "frank"—"I haven't read it." That was last night. The tape was from yesterday afternoon. He hadn't read the bill, with all the curriculum changes that were being proposed that he withdrew and then came back and was going to put back in. He was quoted on the radio on a regular basis for an hour: "I haven't read the bill, because, well, you know, it's 206 pages. I can't read 206 pages that quickly, so I haven't read the bill." Incidentally, that bill was introduced months ago.

Mr. Dave Levac: That's classy.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: It was; that was on the radio, member from Brant—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. Further questions and comments? Seeing none, the honourable member for Durham has up to two minutes for his response.

Mr. John O'Toole: I do want to thank the member from Parkdale-High Park, and I'm just going to briefly respond. She talked about being 10th out of 10. Those are the facts. I guess I'm waiting for the member from Trinity-Spadina. He's quite respected on the education file. I would say that she talked a bit about student debt, as well. I did briefly touch on that. It's not so much in this bill, but it's about this bill.

The member from Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Westdale—I think his passion is completely correct, what he said. But the thing is, they say one thing and do another. Here's the reality: When I look at the reality here, with Open Ontario, what did we do with the single largest file in this province, the energy file? What did they do? They gave \$7 billion to Samsung, a Korean company, when my university is the top university in nuclear engineering. What the heck is going on? We have to go to Korea to get our future built? Come on here, wait a minute. You say one thing and do another. This doesn't make sense. We should be sending our students to Korea. So I'm really upset.

The member from Oxford has it right: The Premier is ambivalent at times. Respectfully, he is the Premier; he was elected by his party members and that. But he's starting to waffle. He screwed up on the transit plan in Toronto. I think the energy file is completely ruined. Brad Duguid doesn't know anything about the file, quite frankly; Gerry Phillips does. My beef is this: This is so important that we'd better get it right, because it is a knowledge economy. We're 10th out of 10 on support for it; our students have the largest amount of debt. This plan here is saying we're going to expand it by 50% more enrolment of foreign students—a cash grab. Look, let's make sure quality supersedes all other goals. Our students are what we're here for, and that should be the number one objective.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I just remind honourable members to refer to each other by their riding names. Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm happy to speak to Bill 43, happy to have the time to be able to cover as much territory as I possibly can. I want to say a few things. Next week, when this bill comes back for debate—because I won't be able to finish my lead—I'll touch on the fact that this government has a strong interest in bringing 20,000 new students to our post-secondary institutions. I will speak about some of the problems connected to that. I'm going to mention distance education, online education, because I've got some concerns about that. I'll briefly touch on OCAD, because it's part of this bill. It's an unusual thing to do when you introduce this kind of bill to introduce OCAD into it. I've got no problem with it but I'll speak to that next week.

I want to start by saying that the minister introduced this bill two days ago, and we are debating this bill today. It's a bit unusual in my mind to have a bill presented two days ago and debated two days after. We have been given very little opportunity to do a review of previous bills. It's true that the government has a few more resources than we do. We've got 10 members; they have over 70. They have a whole lot of research; we don't. We do our best with limited resources, but it would have been nice to have been given a little more time to do a little more careful research. I wanted to point out that it should be a right that opposition members get to be able to have a little more time to consider these bills.

I was a bit surprised that the minister wasn't here to debate the bill. I'm sure he's got other things to do, no

doubt. But normally ministers introduce their bills by way of debate in this Legislature. The member from Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale did the 20 minutes on this bill, and that's fine. I just wanted to point out the unusual nature of the time frame of when a bill is produced and when we're debating in the Legislature, and the fact that the minister wasn't here to present and debate on his own bill.

Secondly, I know that the minister, in his statement two days ago, talked about the following: "I have noted that our Private Career Colleges Act has strong enforcement measures that allow us to protect students. Today, we are proposing amendments to further strengthen our enforcement of this act." I want to say how laughable that statement is, because we—you as a government; we collectively as parliamentarians—don't have a good record on this matter at all. And I am wary of presenting the comments by André Marin, who wrote his report *Too Cool for School*, because I know fully well that he is applying for his job again. To bring forth his name and to bring out his comments I fear could hurt his chances of reappointment, because he has done such a good job. I'm hoping it doesn't, but I fear it could, because he has been so effective, doing his job so well.

I am proud of civil servants who make us accountable—I am. This is not to say the previous Ombudsmen and -women were not good at what they did. But this Ombudsman has made us accountable, and rather than praising him, we are punishing him. The government conveniently says, "Oh, no, we're not. He can reapply, and he is. What's the big deal? It should be the norm that people reapply for the job." Maybe so. It hasn't been the case in the way we dealt with others, where there have been automatic reappointments. But that's fine; I think he's quite happy to go through the reappointment process.

I want to quote him because I want to contrast the opinion of the minister that I just read out on the record with the opinion of Monsieur Marin as it relates to private colleges. He says in the overview, "Despite the fact that it is illegal to operate a private career college that is not registered with the ministry, a considerable number of unregistered training facilities exist in Ontario, presenting a risk to unwary customers." Remember the statement of the minister: "I have noted that our Private Career Colleges Act has strong enforcement measures."

I continue with the reading of the comments made by Mr. Marin: "The ministry is fully cognizant of this reality." In other words, they know. "However, it does not vigorously pursue information about or enforcement against rogue operators." Again, I quote the minister when he says, "Our Private Career Colleges Act has strong enforcement measures that allow us to protect our students." Contrast it with the remarks made by Mr. Marin: "When an unregistered trainer does come to its attention, the ministry typically expends considerable time and effort, not on aggressive enforcement," member from Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale, "but on education and persuasion, attempting to bring the violator

into compliance with the act through encouraging voluntary registration."

1010

Mr. Ted McMeekin: That's why we're bringing forward the act.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: No, member from Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale. No, no, no. The point is, the bill that you have in place has enforcement mechanisms. You do not apply them, and you do not apply them vigorously. In fact, you sit down with the violator and say, "No, no, no, not like that. You could do better. This is what you should do not to be in violation of the act." You understand, member from Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale, who I like, how laughable it is when I hear you and the minister say that you've got tough measures in place, and tough enforcement, and Mr. Marin says yes, you do, but you don't apply them. "Sometimes this approach works, and sometimes, as in the case of Bestech Academy Inc., this passive course leads to unmitigated disaster." So much for your protection of students.

"The ministry had cautioned June Ballegeer, the owner and president of Bestech Academy Inc., in November 2006, that in order to advertise and provide vocational training for gas and oil burner technicians, she had to be registered under the act. In spite of the ministry's warning, Ms. Ballegeer began promoting Bestech Academy and enrolling students without the ministry's knowledge." Member from Ancaster, you have to listen to this. I know you haven't had an opportunity to read this document, because I know how busy we all are, and I have much respect for all the members of this place, including and especially the Premier, who has a big job. He makes \$220,000 running a \$100-billion place. I don't envy him at all. And he can't read every document that comes before him; he cannot. He earns a whole lot less than a whole lot of civil servants in this place, and this man gets slapped around day in and day out. I have a lot of respect for someone who makes so little and gets slapped around day in and day out, versus other civil servants who make \$2 million and \$1.5 million, \$1 million, \$800,000, and they run little institutions, whereas this Premier runs a \$100-billion operation. I'm telling you, a lot of respect.

"In April 2007, the ministry became aware that Bestech Academy was providing illegal fuels industry training at its Stoney Creek campus." That's in the area close to where you are, member from Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale. "By December of that year, the ministry learned that Bestech Academy was also falsely marketing itself as a registered vocational college. Instead of trying to shut down Bestech Academy to protect student consumers, as a result of confusion and miscommunication, the ministry instead proceeded to support the school through the Ontario skills development program. In the end, the province spent upwards of \$60,000, a substantial amount of which represented tuition fees, to send seven mature students for retraining at Bestech Academy."

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Member from Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale, I say this to you with all due respect: You don't have a good record. By that, I don't mean you; the ministry doesn't have a good record. It is a shameful record that I understand you're trying to correct, but you've got a bill in place at the moment that you're not applying. What confidence can anyone have that once you pass a new bill to make enforcement a little better, it's going to have any better result?

Speaker, I know; I can see you're edgy. You're standing to say the time has come, but we'll continue with this discussion next week, I'm sure. Thank you very much.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): It being 10:15 of the clock, this House stands in recess until 10:30, at which time we'll have question period.

The House recessed from 1016 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Today it's my pleasure to welcome the family of page Kyle Rutherford from the great riding of Oxford. I'd like to introduce John and Sandra Rutherford and Ralph and Irene Baker, Kyle's grandparents. It will seem like all of Oxford is here, but these folks are here in the gallery, and they are all relatives of Kyle. Parents Mark and Carolyn Rutherford are here as well, along with Kyle's uncle and aunt, Paul and Marilyn Vanden Borre, sister Jenna, cousins Cole and Tanner Pirie and his friend Mark Vanden Borre. I know they caught the very first train to get here in time to see Kyle enter the chamber with the morning procession. I would like to join with the Legislative Assembly to welcome them to Queen's Park today to watch Kyle perform his duties so admirably as a page.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'd like to welcome the mother of Kate Hickey, the page who is currently here from the riding of Timmins–James Bay. Jane MacAdam is down in order to watch question period and see what her daughter has really been doing for the last three weeks.

Mr. Pat Hoy: I'm pleased to introduce some folks who are very important in the life of Andrew Bacic, one of our pages here from Chatham–Kent–Essex. His mother, Monica, is here; his father, Bob; sister Joyce and brothers Matthew and Justin. Would everybody welcome this very Bacic family?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'd like to welcome the family of page Ara Mooradian. Her father, John, is here, and her sister Talin, and her aunt Debra Roberts, are here today as well.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I'd like to welcome to the Legislature Steven Jack, Max Walton, Clive Walton, Zoe Walton, Kyra Walton and my partner, Shawn Kerwin.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I'd like to welcome Mr. Nick Jasper and the grade 5 class from Sommerville Manor private school. They're here to watch question period and take a tour of Queen's Park.

Mr. Frank Klees: I'd like to welcome Swapnil Abrol, a student at Sir William Mulock high school in Newmarket who also happens to be a co-op student in our constituency office. He's here with us today, as well as Daniel Stackaruk, a political science student who will be working on Parliament Hill for the summer and is here to observe us today. Welcome to both of you.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I'm pleased to introduce to the Legislature the family of Darcy Feagan: Mary Anne Feagan, her mother, and Mike Feagan, her father, in the members' gallery, along with friends, companions, relatives and all sorts of folks from Port Colborne and beyond.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It's my pleasure to introduce to the assembly a number of people who travelled far by bus last night from Timmins, Smooth Rock Falls and area: members of the Save the Met Site Coalition, who are here to watch the debate on Bill 36 this afternoon.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to welcome back to Queen's Park former student usher Jenni Simon and former information officer Svitlana Yurchenko, both seated in the Speaker's gallery this morning. Welcome.

We have with us in the Speaker's gallery today a parliamentary delegation from the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, led by Mr. Tran The Vuong. Please join me in welcoming our guests. They're here today learning about the establishment of constituency offices.

ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSIONER

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that today I have laid upon the table an order in council reappointing Gord Miller as Environmental Commissioner, commencing May 1, 2010, to October 31, 2010.

ORAL QUESTIONS

TOURISM

Mr. Ted Arnott: Millions of people visit Niagara Falls every year, but apparently the Minister of Tourism isn't one of them, so this question is to him. The Niagara region is one of Ontario's most important tourism destinations. Niagara's tourism industry leaders want to meet with the minister to share their vision. But in the 100 days since he was appointed minister, they tell us the minister is ignoring them. They wonder if he's even set foot in the region. Is the Minister of Tourism avoiding Niagara Falls because he has nothing to say, or is it because he can't explain why the Premier handed out an untendered contract for Casino Niagara after the ban on untendered contracts?

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you for the opportunity to talk about tourism in Ontario. During my 100 days—the opposite member was right—I've been very busy with a lot of briefings in terms of culture and tourism. At

the same time, in terms of the Niagara Falls area, we have appointed a new chair for the Niagara Parks Commission. So there are lots of things going on. I myself visit Niagara Falls every year, and many, many times. I will be visiting that area in the near future.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Arnott: The Casino Niagara deal was handed out in open defiance of the Premier's ban on untendered contracts. In fact, it was so blatant that the RFP could have been written by Smitherman. The minister need not avoid Niagara for that. In Niagara, they all know about the decision to abandon the RFP, and it came after the casino's existing landlord hired Liberal lobbyist Bob Lipinski. Meanwhile, their once-lauded Sorbara report on tourism is gathering dust on the minister's shelf. Is the minister avoiding the Niagara tourism industry so he doesn't have to face this question, or is it so that he doesn't have to explain Bob Lipinski's mysterious success fee to lobby for the Maid of the Mist?

Hon. Michael Chan: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: As minister responsible for the OLG and the Niagara casino situation, I am proud that this government has made a record investment in convention and tourism in that area by building the new convention centre. The process associated with Fallsview and the Niagara casino has been, in my view, appropriately handled. We are investing to ensure the future success of that gaming facility. It's an important part of our gaming infrastructure. We remain committed to it. That's why we made the investment in the convention centre. That's why we will continue to work with the region to promote not only the casino, but all the wonderful tourism opportunities in the Niagara region.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Mr. Ted Arnott: The supplementary question is to the Minister of Tourism, and I would respectfully request that he take the question and not refer it. This minister has been in the portfolio for 100 days, but what has been accomplished? It would seem very little. We don't even have an explanation as to why he's sitting on the Sorbara report. It's not that the minister has lacked opportunities to meet members of the tourism industry in Niagara. Just yesterday, the Minister of Training made an announcement at Great Wolf Lodge in Niagara Falls, but the tourism minister missed the opportunity to join him. Is he refusing to meet with the Niagara tourism industry because he's embarrassed by the Liberals' paralysis on tourism, or is it so he doesn't have to explain why they appointed Fay Booker to the Niagara Parks Commission when her main qualification appears to be her Liberal Party membership?

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you once again for the question, and thank you for the opportunity to talk about tourism in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister, no—

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I refer it to the minister.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

Hon. Michael Chan: It is Ontario's highest priority to build a stronger, more competitive economy. So the tourism industry in Ontario is facing numerous challenges, including increases to passport fees and the rising dollar. We are facing these challenges head-on. Our government is fostering a competitive business environment that will attract jobs and bring investments to Ontario, as well as to the Niagara Falls area. This is why we are moving forward with the implementation of 13 new tourism regions. This will improve and coordinate tourism marketing, attract more visitors and generate more economic activity. In the 2009 budget, we announced \$40 million in annual funding to support the industry.

1040

TOURISM

Mr. Ted Arnott: This question goes again to the Minister of Tourism. The minister has had 100 days to meet with the Niagara tourism industry but he appears to have confirmed that he has not. The HST is scheduled to take effect in 63 days. The minister has just 63 days to help the Niagara tourism industry by cutting some of the taxes that are crippling its competitiveness. Can the minister name just one tourism industry leader from Niagara who favours the HST?

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you again for the question. I'm going to talk about the HST the opposite member talked about.

Come July 1, the HST will be in place. This will help all businesses in Ontario, as we know that there's a tremendous business tax reduction. It would help create jobs. According to the Jack Mintz report, the HST will generate close to 600,000 jobs, attracting \$47 billion in investment to Ontario. This is good for tourism because it creates jobs. People are going to go back to work, and when they are working they generate revenue, they generate income through their households and they have disposable income to go around Ontario promoting our domestic tourism market.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Arnott: Twelve days ago, I visited Niagara-on-the-Lake. If the Minister of Tourism took the time to meet with the tourism industry in the past 100 days, he would have heard from Janice Thomson. Ms. Thomson is the executive director of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Chamber of Commerce. She says, "The HST will be increasing the tax on accommodation when people have less money to spend already."

The HST may be on top of destination marketing fees that add a 3% tax on overnight visits. What makes the minister think that charging 16% on accommodations will make Niagara more attractive to potential tourists?

Hon. Michael Chan: Refer to the Minister of Revenue.

Hon. John Wilkinson: I say to the member, I appreciate the question in regard to revenue. Specifically, I can say to the people in the tourism industry and I can say to

the good people at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Chamber of Commerce, I'd be happy to visit them as I've visited—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. Minister?

Hon. John Wilkinson: The tourism industry, particularly hotels and restaurants, have been very clear that the nature of our tax reform lowers their cost of business. For the first time, the PST that they have been paying, which has been embedded in their prices, will come back to them by way of an input tax credit that lowers the cost of business. So not only are we lowering—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will please come to order. Final supplementary.

Mr. Ted Arnott: The tourism industry doesn't want to hear from the tax man, they want to hear from a Minister of Tourism who will stand up to support them.

Day trips from the US have declined dramatically because of a high Canadian dollar, and the Liberals' greedy tax grabs will not make overnight stays any more attractive. The tourism industry wants a plan, not another attack on their competitiveness. They thought they had a plan with the Sorbara report, which is now gathering dust on a shelf. Instead, they've ended up with a government that is now adding a new tax on top of destination marketing fees, on top of a municipal marketing fee of 3% or more, meaning visitors may actually pay up to 19% tax on accommodations.

What is the minister doing to fight for the tourism industry in Niagara Falls and across the province that is under attack by the Liberal government's tax agenda?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I refer that to the Minister of Tourism. It's a tourism question.

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you very much for the question. The member opposite was right.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. Minister?

Hon. Michael Chan: The member opposite was right. It has not been easy in the last year or two and the tourism industry has faced many challenges. The rising dollar is one challenge we will face head-on.

This is why we are committed to investing in key marketing campaigns like There's No Place Like This. This campaign helps us better market Ontario and Niagara Falls. From the spring of 2007 to the fall of 2009, the campaign generated more than 1.5 million trips. We will continue to build on this campaign to ensure that Ontario remains a must-see destination in domestic, national and international markets.

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. The Premier's minister in charge of unfair tax schemes is finally coming clean. At the 11th hour, he's telling Ontario families to buy now to beat the HST. Will the Premier be taking his minister's advice and scrambling to the nearest buy-early and—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. The member from Peterborough, I've been listening to references to a Premier from another province. I think it's important in this chamber that we talk about issues that pertain to the province of Ontario, and I don't need to continue to hear about my good friend who is the Premier of Nova Scotia.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, can I start over again because there was a flow to that question and I feel that I need to start over again? Okay.

The basic question is this: Will the Premier be taking his own minister's advice and scrambling to the nearest buy-early and buy-save event here in Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Personally, I thought the question worked and the flow was there. I just want to be clear about that.

There's been a lot of information of late about the HST and its implementation coming on July 1. One of the things I wanted to do was to just remind Ontarians about the 83% of goods which are not subject to any tax changes. The following is just a partial list of those things which remain unchanged as a result of the HST: groceries, prescription drugs, municipal water bill, luggage, child care services, books, children's clothing, children's footwear, adult clothing, child car seats, cars, car repairs, home maintenance equipment like lawn mowers, snow blowers, sprinklers and the like. There is no change of any kind when it comes to the taxation of those kinds of items.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Minister of Revenue is suggesting that paying upfront for gym memberships, summer trips and theatre subscriptions is going to save Ontario families big bucks. Does the Premier agree that his minister's sage consumer advice sounds like a lot like an admission that the HST, as New Democrats have said all along, is going to cost Ontario families more each and every day?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We've always been pretty straightforward about this. There is going to be an increase on some items, but we've also indicated that we cut personal taxes as of January 1 this year. We've indicated that one of the most important reasons why we're going ahead with our package of tax reforms is to create 600,000 more jobs.

When you talk to Ontario families, they'll tell you that not only do they want to ensure there are jobs for themselves today, they are also prepared to do whatever it takes to make sure there are jobs for their children and grandchildren tomorrow. So this is a long-term investment in a healthy economy, one that will support our schools, our health care system and jobs for our families. We think it is worthwhile to pursue that kind of an enterprise.

1050

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, unfortunately for Ontario families, people can't stockpile gas for the car. They can't prepay heating bills for an eternity, or get next

month's haircuts for the kids today. Since the revenue minister's advice to families seems shallow at best, will the Premier finally admit that his unfair HST hit is going to really hurt unsuspecting families in Ontario at a time when they can very least afford it?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Not only have there been independent reports telling us this will create 600,000 more jobs over the course of 10 years and produce \$47 billion more by way of investment in new business, but there's also another independent report, and I think the title says it all. It says, *Not a Tax Grab After All*. It points out that for middle-income families and low-income families, they will come out at about the same level, all told.

What we will not do is adopt the NDP policy, which was adopted in the province of Nova Scotia, to increase the tax by another 2%. We think that Ontarians are paying enough by way of taxes. We're prepared to go ahead with the comprehensive package of tax reforms because it will result in 600,000 more jobs, something that I know Ontario families deeply support.

MINING INDUSTRY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Premier. Earlier this year, Timmins residents were shocked to learn that their community would be losing hundreds of good-paying jobs. Despite being profitable, Xstrata announced that it would close its Kidd Creek copper and zinc smelter and refinery. The smelter is the most modern in Canada, but next month Xstrata is going to be moving production, and those good jobs, to Quebec. What does this say about the Premier's plan to create jobs and prosperity in the north?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: This is a very unfortunate development for Timmins. I've had the opportunity, together with a representative of my honourable colleague's caucus, to meet on two occasions on this particular issue, including one where we brought the two sides together to see if there might be any basis for a change of heart on the part of the investor here. There was not.

We are now working with the city of Timmins. I am pleased to report that just recently, we provided \$225,000 to pay for a feasibility study of the smelter site located there, to explore ways to continue to support jobs and activity and see if there's anything at all that is possible in terms of what we might use that particular facility for. So we will continue to find ways to work with the people of Timmins, notwithstanding this difficult circumstance.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: We're joined today by some of the workers affected by Xstrata's closure. They're part of a broad coalition that includes municipal leaders, small business owners and organized labour. The coalition wants the Premier to intervene and ensure that resources extracted from Ontario are used to create jobs and prosperity in Ontario. Will the Premier join the fight to save these good northern jobs, or will he shrug his

shoulders and effectively say, "Too bad, so sad," to the people of Timmins and the surrounding region?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to assure my honourable colleague and the folks from Timmins who are here today that we have, in fact, given this particular option serious consideration. I'll tell you why we can't do it. There is no province in Canada that has a law banning the export of raw ore, and I'll give you an example of why. Three quarters of the iron ore used in Ontario steel mills comes from outside Ontario. It comes from Labrador, Quebec, Michigan and Minnesota. There are 6,400 Dofasco jobs in Hamilton and 3,500 Essar jobs in Sault Ste. Marie that rely on imported ore. There's a tremendous amount of trade going back and forth when it comes to ore, and we cannot afford simply to pass a law saying we are not going to accept it.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador certainly has some lessons that he could probably teach this Premier, because you know what? Alarm bells have been going off for years and years in Ontario. When trees are cut down, too many of the logs, and the value-added jobs, are shipped out of Ontario, and now Xstrata says it will gladly extract our resources while handing out pink slips to hundreds of our workers.

The Premier can sit idly by as Ontario's natural resources are shipped elsewhere for processing or he can stand up and ensure that they are used here to create good, local jobs and long-term prosperity in northern Ontario. Which is it going to be?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We currently process in Ontario minerals mined in Quebec, BC, Manitoba, Newfoundland, the US, Peru, Chile and Australia. I want to quote CAW Local 599 president Dennis Couvrette. He said, "Mining companies in Ontario have always exchanged mineral resources between neighbouring provinces, in fact we continue to import metal concentrates from around the globe and transform them into pure metal in our smelter and refinery in Timmins."

We cannot cut ourselves off from the rest of the world. To do so would be to compromise our economic strength and to eliminate so many jobs—thousands of jobs—in other parts of the province. We cannot pursue the particular solution put forward by my honourable colleague.

CURRICULUM

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: My question is for the Premier. The McGuinty Liberals have had over a week to get their story straight on their plans for the sex education curriculum. First they said they consulted, then they said they did not. Next, they said there was one curriculum, then, in response to reporters, admitted there was a second one being drafted for the Catholic schools. Yesterday, the Premier said that he had not read the curriculum. Then, minutes later, he said that he had.

Instead of this confusion and guessing, why have the Premier and his education minister not arranged for a

briefing from the bureaucrats or even talked to the former Minister of Education?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Education.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I'm happy to have the opportunity to address the question. I would offer to the former Minister of Education a briefing so that you would understand exactly how the one curriculum in Ontario is delivered in the four publicly funded systems.

Let me tell you about what is in our physical and health education curriculum. In grade 1, we teach our children why people need food. We also talk about the food groups and Canada's Food Guide. In grade 2, we talk about the importance of physical education and how to improve their heart and lung capacity.

The honourable member has indicated that this is an issue of importance. It absolutely is. I think that we are doing some excellent work in the physical and health education programs in our school—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: To the Premier again: I'm not quite sure how the minister can answer for the Premier, because this is all about the confusion that has reigned in the province of Ontario now for over a week about what this government is planning to do with the changes that they are making to the sex education curriculum, and their lack of posting the information in order that all parents in the province would know what was going on. It has become very embarrassing recently. In fact, we've seen some of the ministers leaving scrums and not wanting to respond to the questions they're being asked.

Why is the Premier of this province not aware of what is going on when it comes to this very sensitive issue, which has contributed—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: This has been a very important issue. I would say to the people of Ontario, we certainly have heard from them that they very much appreciate that the Premier has listened to them. That is why we have committed—and information is in our schools—that we will look forward to implementing that part of the physical and health education curriculum.

The revised part that deals with physical and health education: That's 90% of what has been developed. The 10% that deals with sex education: We look forward to putting in place a plan that will engage parents and families on this important issue. What the people of Ontario and parents do understand is that there has been one curriculum for physical and health education in the province of Ontario. That continues to be the case.

1100

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Premier. Premier, the coalition members who've met with you on

two occasions now asked you to become their champion. We asked you to work with us and with Xstrata in order to determine what the cost factors are that are making their decision to leave Ontario. Our question to you is simply this: Why were you not prepared to intervene in the case of Xstrata, but you're certainly prepared to intervene in the auto sector, which was able to save some jobs as a result?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: If only to reconfirm what the Premier said earlier, too, this is a devastating announcement that took place, in terms of the impact it will have on Timmins. I think it's so important to point out the involvement of our government in trying to work with you, with the coalition. Certainly, the Premier had a number of meetings. He met with the global CEO of Xstrata, Mick Davis, and Ian Pearce, the Canadian president, as well.

Obviously, in the meeting with the coalition, I think the request was, "Can you help, Premier, to pull together a meeting between Xstrata and the coalition to at least look at the opportunities that are there?" The Premier, of course, was able to do that as well.

There is no question that, indeed, this continues to be a very, very difficult situation. I look forward, in the supplementary, to speaking about why, perhaps, your private member's bill may be a problem for workers all across Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I go back again to the same point. We were very clear in what we've asked the Premier and your government to do, and that is, if Xstrata has got cost issues, namely, electricity prices and meeting environmental regulation, then we ask them to put that on the table and for the Premier to do his job. And that is, to ensure that in the end we are able to deal with the issues that Xstrata see as problematic here in Ontario, and that we are able to save the thousands of jobs that will be lost as a result of this closure.

So I say to you again, there is still time. Is your government prepared to work with us and work with Xstrata in order to deal with those cost issues so that we're able to save those jobs in Timmins for the people of Ontario?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I am certainly more than conscious, as is the Premier, as is our government, about how devastating this decision has been. We want to work with the community, and are continuing to do so. We did make an announcement related to funding for alternative uses of the site. There is absolutely no question that the meeting that took place was to take a new look, one more look, at whether or not Xstrata would change their position. Clearly, they were not in a position to do so.

I think it's so important to point out that the fact is that to take measures such as supporting your private member's bill would be a challenge in terms of imperilling thousands of jobs all across the province of Ontario. I

think we would be opening up a situation where, indeed, there would be a trade war that could take place.

The long and the short of it is, we'll continue to work with you—I will—and we appreciate your involvement. It's been a positive experience in that sense. I welcome the coalition here to Queen's Park, and we'll look forward to continuing to work together to help make Timmins and the community surrounding Timmins prosperous.

COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRES

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. An important issue among my constituents is access to quality health care, and it continues to be an issue. They want good-quality care for their loved ones, they want it close to where they are and they want it when they need it. It's crucial that we continue to strive to improve the ability of Ontarians to access quality care without always having to enter the local emergency room.

As the minister knows, community health centres across the province have been filling that gap by providing excellent care for families around the province. In my riding of Kitchener-Conestoga, the Woolwich Community Health Centre and its satellites, the Wellesley Township Community Health Centre and Linwood Nurse Practitioner Office continue to do great work under the direction of Denise Squire.

Could the minister update the House on the progress being made with community health centres across Ontario—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The member from Kitchener-Conestoga is absolutely right. Community health centres are an extremely important part of our health care system. They achieve high-quality patient care when the emergency room isn't the best choice.

Today we're celebrating the opening of the newest community health centre in Ontario, in Woodstock. This community health centre will provide the people of Woodstock a very high-quality, reliable source of health care that's a real alternative to the local emergency room.

In coordination with the opening of this CHC, all CHCs throughout the province are proclaiming the last Friday of April to be Community Health Day. I want to wish all the community health centres the very best Community Health Day and I want them to know how much we appreciate the extraordinary work—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Supplementary?

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: I am pleased to hear that our government is focused on providing Ontarians with significant health resources within local communities. I know that my constituents of Kitchener-Conestoga will also be pleased to hear this.

Community health, as the minister pointed out, is an important aspect in providing quality care to all Ontar-

ians. It's an important aspect of local care and allows patients to avoid emergency rooms for minor conditions.

In light of Community Health Day, could the minister please describe what the government is doing to provide Ontarians with important community-based care?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm sure the people in this Legislature will be happy to know that our investments have supported the largest-ever expansion of community health centres. In fact, there are now 103 community health centres or satellites operating or under development across this province. As a result, CHCs are now serving 75,000 more Ontarians, bringing the total to approximately 330,000 Ontarians who are receiving their health care through community health centres. They are a vital piece of our plan to improve access to health care in this province.

We've also provided funding to community health centres to carry out other programs that enhance the capacity of people to stay independent as long as possible in their own homes—\$507 million in community health services; funding for assistive—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is for the Premier because I know that he'll be very concerned about what's happening with our schools.

I have a letter from the central CCAC confirming that 12 months ago there were 449 children on the wait-list for speech-language pathology in the York region public and Catholic schools alone, and that today there are more than 1,000 children on that wait-list. These are children who are struggling with speech-language disorders, which can have serious long-term consequences without timely intervention.

Can the Premier tell us why more than 1,000 children in York region are being denied essential speech-language therapy and why their parents are being told they have to pay for private therapy if they want timely treatment?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'm pleased to talk about this important issue. Ensuring that children across the province have timely access to preschool speech and language is something that every community agency that my ministry funds—for example, the Ontario Early Years, the Toronto Preschool Speech and Language—it's an important service delivery model. It helps those children in their earliest years, to ensure they get the help they need. I have seen first-hand the incredible work that's done in community organizations.

At the same time, as we look to see that our kids will be in all-day junior kindergarten and senior kindergarten, we know that the education system will be called upon to take up the continued work for kids in the schools. I know that the Minister of Education, as our two minis-

tries work very closely together to make sure there's a continuum of services for kids zero to four and—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: This is absolutely bizarre. The Hansard record will show that the minister didn't even hear the question.

I'm talking about children, more than 1,000 on a wait-list in York region alone, who are not getting speech-language therapy. Here is what a therapist says:

"I will have eight clients in my caseload this May, compared with 25 that I had at the same time last year. Many of my colleagues are in a similar predicament and are wondering why the referrals have suddenly stopped."

We're wondering that too. Therapists are not getting the referrals to treat children. Children—more than 1,000—are not getting speech-language therapy. I'd like to know from the minister: Why are these children being kept on a wait-list and what will she do about it?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I guess the question is somewhat rich, coming from someone who was on the other side of government when those services truly did not receive additional support.

Since 2003, we have increased funding for preschool speech and language by up to 40%. With that funding, we have been able to expand the preschool speech and language program to serve an additional 7,000 children with complex special needs each year.

1110

As you might have heard earlier this week, we announced that I'll be working closely with Dr. Charles Pascal to look at all of the services that we provide children from zero to four, to find a way to ensure that those services are best delivered, get out to the front lines and respond to the issues of need in each community.

I look forward to speaking to the member to learn about the specific circumstances that exist in his community, but I can tell him that we are—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

CURRICULUM

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Promotion de la santé. Can the Minister of Health Promotion tell us what age she thinks is appropriate to teach kids about body parts, including penis, testicles, vagina and vulva?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: To the Minister of Education.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: We have a physical and health education program in our schools. It was in our schools when the Conservatives were in government, when the NDP was in government. It's a program on which we have worked co-operatively with educators and with families. Those terms, the correct names for body parts, are presented to children in the primary grades. The Fully Alive document that I have with me, one that has been in place since, I believe, 1990, perhaps when the

honourable member's party was in government, would use those terms in grade 1.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'd like to go back to the Minister of Health Promotion. This is a health promotion question. The minister's mandate is to help Ontarians to lead healthy lives. New Democrats believe that comprehensive health education taught by professionals in the classroom is crucial to the health and well-being of children and youth. Education is our best tool in preventing sexual abuse and sexually transmitted diseases and delaying sexual activity.

Does the minister agree with the Premier's decision to back off teaching kids about healthy relationships and the facts of life? How is this going to help them lead healthier lives?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: This is a very important issue, and that is why already in our curriculum we deal with those very important subjects: bullying and abuse, use of cigarettes, the effects of alcohol; also with respect to cyber-talking and online gambling, and about dating-based violence, as well as racially based violence and how to prevent it. So we have those topics in our schools right now.

We want to do more work with parents and with families. We want to improve on the material that is being provided to them right now in our schools. We're going to take the time and we're going to talk to more parents about this so that families will be confident that the information their children are getting in schools is age-appropriate and prepares them well for the world that they're going into.

TAXATION

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: My question is to the Minister of Revenue. Farmers stand to benefit significantly with the implementation of the harmonized sales tax. The March edition of Ontario Grain Farmer ran an article that talked about the benefits farmers will enjoy under the harmonized sales tax. The article states that the corporate income tax rate for farm income will be cut from 12% to 10%, and it states that it is estimated that farmers will save 39 cents per acre per year under the HST.

The member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington won't stand up for his constituents and ask this question on behalf of the landowners in the riding, so I will. Minister, what will the HST mean for farmers?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to thank my rural colleague from Northumberland. Under a single sales tax, farmers will be able to claim input tax credits on all of their business inputs—everything from tractors to hay balers to combines. This means farmers will be able to claim input credits for a number of important things they are currently paying provincial sales tax on, including trucks, office equipment, freezers and all-terrain vehicles. This will save them money. Importantly, this money is predictable and bankable.

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture has long said that Ontario farmers pay at least \$25 million in provincial sales tax that would be fully recovered by farmers in Ontario if they were treated like farmers in the Atlantic provinces and Quebec. On July 1, they will be. By moving to a single sales tax, we are saving farmers money and levelling the playing field with farmers elsewhere in Canada.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Thank you, Minister. During his bid to win the leadership of the Conservative Party, the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington stated, “You know, we can all recognize that there ought to be some efficiencies and efficacy with a single bureaucratic administration of the retail consumption tax,” and others in the farming community agree with that member.

The Ontario Farmer reported that Henry Stevens, the president of the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario, stated, “Agriculture’s supposed to come out ahead,” to the tune of an estimated \$30 million, based on 2007 numbers. That’s an average of \$600 per farmer.

And Bette Jean Crews, a constituent of mine and president of the OFA, said their research shows—

Interjection.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Minister, farmers on the ground know that the HST is going to benefit the agricultural sector. Will the minister—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. John Wilkinson: Farmers are going to save time and money through a far simpler, more streamlined sales tax system. They will deal with one set of rules instead of two, with one set of auditors rather than two, one set of paperwork rather than two, one government rather than two.

Farms, as businesses, would benefit from our significant cuts to business taxes for large and small enterprises. The HST is part of a comprehensive tax package that’s supposed to make sure that our tax system is competitive in the 21st century so that our farmers are creating 21st-century jobs. They are so very happy that we’re cutting not only large corporate tax but also small business tax, and for most of our farmers the key benefit is eliminating the small business surtax. We’ll be the only province in Canada to eliminate this tremendous drag on business. This will empower our farmers and give them something that is both predictable and bankable—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

TOBACCO CONTROL

Mr. Toby Barrett: Ontario’s Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, which has been surveying the student use of addictive substances since 1968, reports that 60,000 students in Ontario now smoke contraband tobacco, as do half the smokers in the province. Those 60,000 young people are now part of a criminal network that supplies cigarettes at \$15 a carton, tax free, as oppos-

ed to the regular \$60 to \$80 a carton. This is unprecedented. Nowhere else in the world does this occur.

Why on earth would the McGuinty government allow 60,000 students to get hooked on illegal tobacco?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Revenue.

Hon. John Wilkinson: Let us be very clear. Those people who produce, sell and purchase contraband tobacco are stealing from their neighbours. Those of us who pay our taxes end up subsidizing those who feel that they don’t have to pay the tax. We’re very clear about that.

I’d like to explain to the member exactly what we’re doing. There are a number of things that we’ve been doing, working in conjunction with other governments, First Nations, municipalities and police enforcement, to eradicate the scourge of contraband tobacco in this province.

It is important for us to first of all set that public expectation, which is so key. There are people trying to hook our children with cheap cigarettes and we will not accept that. That is why, just in the last few years, convictions have tripled, seizures are going up by more than 50% a year and our take on those—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I didn’t ask you the question.

Sixty-thousand students buy illicit tobacco from the trunk of a car, no tax, no ID requested; access to anything money can buy—drugs or guns. Nowhere else in the world has government lost control of half the tobacco market. Is this political correctness in the extreme? What are you people afraid of? Why—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. The Minister of Municipal Affairs, I’ve reminded him of that language before. Withdraw the comment, please.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Which one was that?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Withdraw the comment.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I just heard someone say it’s bigoted over there and that’s not withdrawn?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Just withdraw the comment, please.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I will withdraw the comment. I hope others withdraw their comments.

1120

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Just the unequivocal withdrawal, please.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I have given an unequivocal withdrawal.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just remind all members that, yes, there are times in the course of question period where things do get heated, but we do need to be conscious of language that is used. I direct that to all members.

Supplementary.

Mr. Toby Barrett: You have lost control of half the tobacco trade in Ontario. People do not understand why

any government would allow this to occur. Why are you allowing 60,000 students to smoke illegal tobacco?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I'm quite surprised by the member who has asked me this question. I distinctly remember the following quote from the member: "In my view, the jury is out on second-hand smoke.... I have never seen a coroner's report indicating it as a cause of death."

I understand that this is an issue that is of importance. I understand that in his riding, the federal government has spent a lot of money to get rid of tobacco and that it has doubled, but this is what you need to know: We have redoubled our efforts, at our ministry, working in conjunction with the RCMP, the OPP, the federal government and the US government. We are redoubling our efforts to eradicate the scourge of contraband tobacco. It is not an easy job. There is much money to be made by those who will purvey cigarettes to our children, but we will not rest until we eliminate the scourge of contraband tobacco.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Light rapid transit in Hamilton would bring huge benefits to a struggling city: reducing commute times, cleaning the air, sparking economic activity and getting athletes and spectators to the Pan Am Games. The government has cut \$4 billion from the \$11.5 billion allocated to Metrolinx. My question is this: Is this going to stop Hamilton's light rapid transit dream dead in its tracks?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm very happy to say to the member opposite—and I think she knows this—that on April 1, 2009, the Premier announced that Ontario is moving ahead with the rapid regional transit plan, and that \$3 million is included in that plan to plan for Hamilton. The board of Metrolinx has approved the Hamilton BCA, and I want to thank the city of Hamilton and Metrolinx for working together.

The announcement that was made in the budget—I think the member opposite knows—was very specific about some projects that were being dealt with in Toronto, that those specific projects needed to be stretched over a longer period of time. The conversation with Hamilton is ongoing, and we look forward to a good transit plan for the city of Hamilton.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I fear that the Premier and this minister simply don't get how transformational LRT can be for the city of Hamilton. We know that badly needed transit lines in Toronto are being mothballed. Hamiltonians are understandably worried that their city's light rail plans are going to meet a similar fate. Hamilton can't go ahead with light rapid transit without provincial approval and funding. If construction doesn't start very, very soon, light rail lines won't be ready for the Pan Am

Games. So my question remains: Will the Premier guarantee that Hamilton's LRT money will flow this year?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think the member opposite knows that the benefits case analysis that was done by Metrolinx looked at a number of options and, obviously, we have to look at what is most viable. The city of Hamilton is working with us on that. We have to look at all of those options. We've committed to moving ahead on a transit plan for Hamilton.

I think what the member opposite needs to do is not engage in scaremongering, because this government understands that transit is extremely important for the greater Toronto and Hamilton areas. That's why we are moving ahead. That's why the work continues to be done. That's why Metrolinx is working with the city of Hamilton. We're going to move ahead, and I think what the member opposite should be doing is working with us and working with her community to make sure that the right option is chosen.

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Mr. Khalil Ramal: My question is for the Minister of Labour. Minister, now that spring is here and the school year is almost finished, many young workers are beginning their search for summer jobs. In my riding of London-Fanshawe, young people are already out and about, seeking employment to help them pay for tuition fees and other expenses. But although a summer job is something that many young people look forward to, the flip side is that our young workers can face workplace hazards.

I know that your ministry is concerned about worker health and safety in general. Can you tell us what you're doing in order to make sure all the new workers are in good shape and are not going to face those difficulties when they find their jobs?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I'm so pleased that the member has asked me this very important question about our young workers.

As I've said frequently in this House, safety is paramount to the Ministry of Labour and to our government. It may interest the member and his constituents to know that I recently announced the launch of our new and young worker health and safety blitz. For the third year in a row, my ministry will be conducting a blitz across Ontario that will focus on workplace safety of young and new workers.

I was honoured to announce this blitz at the sixth annual GTA simulcast event and luncheon at Victoria Park Collegiate Institute in Scarborough. The event was put on by a great group, the Our Youth at Work foundation. They're doing an excellent job of helping to educate young people about workplace safety.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I know my constituents are glad to hear this minister speaking in order to protect them when they find a job at a workplace, and I know that the minister and his ministry are working very hard to create

a mechanism to protect the young workers in the province of Ontario.

I know I heard that he launched a blitz to protect the workers, but is there any other mechanism in place in order to protect the workers? Also, is his ministry doing their best in order to find a way to make sure that all the students who get jobs in the summertime can protect themselves? Can you tell us, Minister?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: Again, I thank the member from London-Fanshawe for the question.

All of our health and safety blitzes consist of targeted, proactive enforcement campaigns where inspectors go into workplaces to focus on prevention or specific hazards. In this case, our inspectors will be checking to make sure that new and young workers are properly trained, oriented and supervised; that they meet the minimum age requirements that are in legislation; and that they are protected by safety measures to prevent injuries.

In addition to this blitz, we're also teaching our young workers about workplace health and safety in school, before they get a job, and have made a health and safety curriculum mandatory in all our grades.

We also have a designated website called WorkSmartOntario, as well as a young worker portal on the ministry's website, which makes occupational health and—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Minister of Health. Being without a family doctor in rural Ontario, as you can imagine, is a very stressful situation experienced by far too many people. Your Health Care Connect program was supposed to help orphaned patients find a doctor. As it is, someone moving to my riding of Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke must orphan themselves from their current family physician just to get on the list with Health Care Connect. Surely, the intent of the program was not to create more orphaned patients.

Minister, this needs to be fixed. Will you commit to doing so?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I thank the member opposite for the question. It gives me a chance to talk about Health Care Connect, which is a very innovative and highly successful program.

Health Care Connect is a way that people who don't have a family physician can get attached to a family physician who is taking new patients. It has been very, very frustrating for patients looking for a physician to phone and phone and phone. Now, there is one place they can go to, Health Care Connect, and get attached to a physician who is accepting new patients.

We've had tremendous success. In fact, at the Erie St. Clair LHIN, I attended an event where they wanted more awareness of the program because they knew they could do better. There were physicians prepared to take patients.

It's a highly successful program, and I look forward to the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, she's singing the praises, but there are obviously problems.

New constituents of mine, Richard Newcombe and his spouse, Linda, moved to Pembroke from Ottawa. They hoped to find a family doctor in Pembroke. They were shocked to find out that in order to even be on the Health Care Connect list, they had to give up the family doctor they had in Ottawa. In essence, they had to orphan themselves in order to be considered.

1130

Minister, this is a glaring weakness in your Health Care Connect program. This amounts to forcing someone to abandon the lifeboat in hopes that the Queen Mary may come along. Wouldn't it make more sense that the program require you to give up your family physician only after securing the services of another?

Minister, would you commit to correcting this oversight in your program?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Attaching people to primary health care has been a very, very important initiative of this government. I'm very happy to say that over 900,000 more Ontarians in fact have access to primary care now than when we took office. Health Care Connect has been part of the solution in connecting people to family doctors.

Because we have achieved such success attaching people—in fact, there are parts of this province where one of my colleagues told me that doctors had set up in a mall; they were trying to attract new physicians. This would have been unheard of in 2003.

As we continue to really build the foundation of health care in this province, I will take the member opposite's recommendation under advisement: As we attach the unattached, then maybe it is time to turn our attention to those who are already attached.

LABOUR RELATIONS

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le premier ministre. J'd like to quote from Hansard: "The Premier has committed that the government will not hire replacement workers to perform the tasks of unionized employees involved in a work stoppage...." This is the right thing to do. This commitment from our Premier shows an understanding that the use of replacement workers is wrong and that no good comes out of scab labour.

Why, then, is the McGuinty government so sheepish about bringing in a law that would ban replacement workers in this province?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I want to thank the member for the question. On this side of the House, we understand how important the collective bargaining process is. We understand that collective agreements are the most productive agreements, the fairest agreements, the most

stable agreements for everyone. At the Ministry of Labour, our focus is always to work with the parties to bring them together to get an agreement like that done.

We do that through our mediation and conciliation team, and we have a tremendous record. We have the best record we have seen in the province of Ontario in the last 30 years. Over 97% of our collective agreements get done without any work stoppage. They get done by having the parties work together, find that common ground and get an agreement done. That's what we'll continue to do—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: One doesn't exclude the other. You can still have good bargaining, but for that 3% where it falls apart, you can have stronger laws.

On October 8 last year, the Liberal caucus voted down Bill 86, which would have banned replacement workers in this province during strikes and lockouts. Every Liberal member who spoke quoted statistics from the same single source that predicted doom and gloom if the bill was passed. I spent much time reading academic papers and articles on the subject, and the overwhelming evidence does not support that doom and gloom. It points to shorter and less violent strikes, decreased stress for all involved and improved relations between unions and employers, who can then focus on real bargaining issues, which is what the member was talking about.

It is the law in Quebec and British Columbia, and successive governments did not change the law after they came to power. Will the Premier or the minister take this issue seriously and—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: Our government has done much to restore balance to labour relations in the province of Ontario, and the record speaks for itself. As I mentioned, in the past few years, approximately 97% of all negotiations have resulted in settlements without any work stoppages. In 2009, for example, 1,981 settlements were achieved in Ontario without strike or lockout.

I have to say that I feel this is due in large part to our Ministry of Labour mediation team. This is a team of highly skilled and extremely professional individuals who go into the workplace to help the parties—to help labour, to help the employer—so that they can get these productive, stable, fair agreements done.

What those settlements translated into in 2009 was that almost 600,000 employees worked through negotiations without losing a single day of work due to a strike or lockout. This is an outstanding—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

TOURISM

Mr. David Oraziatti: My question is for the Minister of Tourism and Culture. For the past several weeks now, the Canadian dollar has been near parity with the Amer-

ican currency. This gives Canadians more purchasing power and greater incentive to travel abroad. However, communities across Ontario depend on tourism, especially those at or near border crossings such as my riding of Sault Ste. Marie. Whether you're in a border community or not, Ontarians depend largely on tourism, which contributes immensely to Ontario's economy. As previously mentioned, our businesses are already concerned about the negative impacts of the proposed increase to American passport fees and the impact this may have on tourism in Ontario. This, coupled with the potential decrease in domestic visitors, is a constant challenge. Minister, what actions are you taking to ensure that our tourism economy remains strong and viable?

Hon. Michael Chan: I want to thank the honourable member from Sault Ste. Marie for the question. There's no doubt tourism faces many challenges, including the high dollar. But our government is up for the challenge. Tourism generates \$23 billion to our economy, supporting 300,000 jobs. They support us in building a strong, more competitive economy by attracting both jobs and investments. Since 2003, we have invested in our tourism agencies over \$500 million in operating funding and over \$100 million in capital funding. Our most recent budget brought \$40 million in annual funding to support tourism. We have invested another \$25 million over each of the next two years to support the development of regional organizations. There's more to do, but our government is on the right track.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. David Oraziatti: As the minister has referenced, tourism contributes over \$23 billion annually to Ontario's GDP, supporting more than 300,000 jobs. This can be in part attributed to the increase in Ontarians travelling within the province and Americans crossing the border. In a recent report, the Canadian Tourism Commission noted that US travellers, mostly from border states, are particularly sensitive to currency fluctuations. Ontarians and Americans make up approximately 98% of the tourism in our province. The strong Canadian dollar makes it more attractive for Canadians to travel abroad and Americans to stay closer to home, a trend not supportive of continued growth in Ontario's tourism industry. Minister, can you explain what our government is doing to sustain and expand our tourism industry?

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you again for the question. Expanding Ontario's tourism market is a top priority of this government. Our investments speak to that. Since 2003, we have invested almost \$700 million in our tourism agencies. As well, Ontario is expanding into new markets by increasing our presence on the world stage. And over the next several years Ontario will be on the world stage again and again as we welcome the G8/G20 this summer, the International Indian Film Academy Awards next year, and WorldPride 2014. How about the Pan American Games in 2015? This type of exposure is vital to showcase Ontario to the world. We will seize these opportunities to show potential visitors that there is truly no place like this.

UNPARLIAMENTARY LANGUAGE

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just want to offer an apology to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. I appreciated his withdrawal of the comment. There were comments made that I should have called at the time. As he knows, I do not have the ability to retroactively ask a member to withdraw a comment, but I do offer that apology to the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome students from James Cardinal McGuigan Academy who have joined us here at Queen's Park today, along with their teacher Mr. Pulcini.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to welcome in the Speaker's gallery Bliss Baker, Dainora Juozapavicius and Lois Mahon.

Welcome to Queen's Park today.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to ask all members to join me as we take this opportunity to say thank you to this wonderful group of pages for the great job they've done for us. We wish you all the best in your future endeavours.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member from Haldimand-Norfolk has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Revenue concerning students using illicit tobacco. This matter will be debated next Tuesday at 6 p.m.

There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1140 to 1300.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Newmarket-Aurora has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Children and Youth Services concerning speech-language therapy. This matter will be debated next Tuesday at 6 p.m.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Reza Moridi: I would like to acknowledge and welcome representatives of the national governing council of the Baha'i Community of Canada, the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Canada, and members of the Baha'i Community of Ontario, who are with us today.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Welcome to Queen's Park.

M^{me} France G  linas: I would like to welcome striking workers from Port Colborne and Sudbury who are, as we speak, coming into the Legislature to support the proceedings this afternoon.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

POLICE

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm pleased to draw the Legislature's attention to the very important event that's happening this coming Sunday, May 2, and that's the ceremony of remembrance for our lost police officers. It's at the Ontario Police Memorial just on the other side of the street at Queen's Park Circle.

This year, we have five inductees on to the memorial wall. I want to read their names in case this opportunity doesn't come up earlier next week. It was a very difficult year in the police community in Ontario. As I said, we lost five police officers: OPP provincial constable Alan Hack on July 6, 2009; Ottawa Police Service constable Eric Czapnik on December 29, 2009; RCMP superintendent Douglas Coates, January 12, 2010; Peel Regional constable James Ochakovsky, March 2, 2010; and OPP provincial constable Vu Pham, March 8, 2010.

It's important that we recognize the fact that the Ontario Police Memorial Foundation puts this event on each year. I'd like to thank the vice-president of the OPP Association, Jim Christie.

I'd encourage all members of the Legislature to try to get out, if they possibly can, on Sunday to honour those men and women who have given their lives in the line of duty for us.

JOHN PAUL THE GREAT FAMILY CENTRE

Mr. Mario Sergio: I have a statement on behalf of St. Augustine of Canterbury. Recently, I had the privilege to attend the grand opening of the family centre named after John Paul the Great. This wonderful project is the combination of a vision to provide adequate facilities to meet the ever-growing demands of the needs of our community.

I commend Father Daniel Montesana, who has spearheaded his team of dedicated and compassionate helpers to provide activities in the centre such as after-school programs for children; spiritual retreats; assistance to the poor, sick and elderly; defence and promotion groups for life; family mission outreach; family and youth week-ends; and cultural and arts presentations. Their after-school programs are not just a place for children to be entertained, but offer a safe place to learn to appreciate authentic values and ethics, especially with regard to God, life and the family.

Adults attending the family centre will find a place to strengthen support and counsel families in areas such as marriage, domestic violence, substance abuse and how to foster intergenerational communication.

I'm very proud of the outstanding work Father Daniel Montesana and the parishioners of St. Augustine of Canterbury have accomplished. They will now be able to assist more families, youths, single parents and new Canadians in our community. They are indeed transforming the church into a second home.

OLIVIA ROSS

Mr. Norm Miller: I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge and congratulate Olivia Ross, who has been awarded the Provincial Women's Hockey League's top goaltender's award.

Olivia is only 17 years old, a resident of Huntsville, and plays for the Mississauga Junior Chiefs. She helped make her team overall winners of the regular season. Her record this season was remarkable: 42 wins and only two losses. Her humble attitude toward winning this achievement was a model for other athletes, as she attributed a great deal of her accomplishment to her teammates and put the success of her team ahead of her own.

Olivia began her love of hockey playing road hockey at home with her brother, and she now has her eyes set on continuing her winning ways for a university team. She has already won championships around Ontario, including an Ontario Federation of School Athletic Associations championship, and won a bronze medal at the Ontario Women's Hockey Association tournament.

No doubt, one of the highlights for Olivia was playing against Team China as they prepared for the Olympics. China was ranked seventh overall in the world at the time, and Olivia helped her team win that game 4-1.

I want to congratulate Olivia Ross on her outstanding performances and achievements, and I wish her luck in her future endeavours at university and in the game of hockey.

MUNICIPAL PLANNING

Mr. Michael Prue: On April 25, I had an opportunity to go to my adjacent riding of Scarborough Southwest. There was a demonstration there by the Concerned Citizens of Quarry Lands Development against the proposal to build 1,455 units on vacant land. This is adjacent to the Beach. Many of my residents were out there; some 300 or more people attended.

The issue isn't just about what is going to be built on that land, but the paucity of the Planning Act, because that approval was given in 1968 in conjunction with the building of the Scarborough expressway, which of course never happened. Some 42 years later, somebody plans to develop on those lands, using a 42-year-old planning approval.

Under the building code, you can only build for exactly one year from the date of the issuance of a

building permit, but there is no limitation on the Planning Act. Therefore, you have something happening here which I don't think is right at all.

There need to be limitations on the Planning Act and development, and it needs to clearly set out a time frame. If building does not take place for a period of some five or perhaps 10 years, then new planning approval should be sought and accepted.

The government needs to change the law so that people aren't building on 42-year-old plans. The community demands it.

GLENN KIFF AND LINDA WAYNE

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Today I rise in the House to acknowledge the tremendous innovation and creativity of two local London business owners who have turned a negative situation into a positive one.

Glenn Kiff and Linda Wayne, co-owners of East Village Coffeehouse in London, were having their shrubbery and plants stolen outside their place of business. They took advantage of that unfavourable situation. The two reached out to their community and requested that citizens donate unwanted plants to the coffee shop, and if Londoners were interested in these plants, they were more than welcome to come and take them home. This would not only encourage beautifying the neighbourhood, but it would also encourage a sense of friendship and community within the neighbourhood.

1310

I would like to congratulate both Mr. Kiff and Ms. Wayne for such an innovative and inspiring response to what typically ends up as a negative ordeal. Not only were they able to solve this problem in a constructive way, they were also able to benefit their community and their environment. I commend them both, and I wish them great success in the future for bringing the community together and turning a negative issue into a positive one.

PHARMACISTS

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I want to read into the record today a letter from a pharmacist in my community, Bryan Hastie, who is an independent pharmacist. His wife is also a pharmacist. They are going to be very negatively impacted by the proposed reductions to pharmacies, and certainly we would see a reduction in front-line care to patients. He writes:

"Mr. Premier,

"I'm a pharmacist. My wife ... is a pharmacist. We have" two children, 10- and seven-year-old boys. "We don't have a big pharmacy;" we have a little one. "Last year our little pharmacy allowed me to take home an income approximately one third of that of a staff pharmacist employed at any Shoppers Drug Mart....

"I know that if these funding cuts your government has announced go through, it will cripple my business....

"You have attempted to portray this issue as being a fight between the government and 'big pharmacy.' That's not what it is at all. The biggest chains will survive.... However, one half of all pharmacies in Ontario are small family-owned businesses like mine. Your poorly conceived and short-sighted cuts will cripple us and many will close. Small businesses closed and families thrust into crisis. Patient will have less choice about where to access their pharmacy services, those services will be reduced...."

Please reconsider.

BAHA'I COMMUNITY

Mr. Reza Moridi: Allah-u-Abha. Today is the ninth day of Ridvan, a 12-day festival observed by Baha'is around the world. It marks the declaration of the prophet and founder of the Baha'i faith in 1863. His Holiness Baha'u'llah announced that he is the latest in a series of divine messengers that have appeared throughout human history. His essential message was one of unity. He taught the oneness of God, the oneness of the human family and the oneness of religion.

For Baha'is, these 12 days are a spiritual springtime, a time of rejoicing. This also marks the beginning of the Baha'is' administrative year. On the first day of Ridvan, Baha'is elect their local spiritual assemblies, a consultative body that serves their communities.

Every year during the Ridvan festival, Baha'i delegates in 184 countries gather in national conventions to elect their national spiritual assemblies. On April 30, Canadian Baha'i delegates will meet in Toronto to elect and consult with their national spiritual assembly.

His Holiness Baha'u'llah's teachings have attracted more than five million followers around the world. They live in more than 100,000 locations and come from nearly every nation, ethnic group, cultural, professional, social and economic background. Some 12,000 Baha'is live in Ontario.

The Baha'i community of Canada hosted the reception at Queen's Park today to celebrate Ridvan. Please join me in wishing them a festive and happy Ridvan.

POLISH CONSTITUTION ANNIVERSARY

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: May 3 is of special significance to citizens of Polish ancestry, because they will be celebrating the 219th anniversary of the Polish Constitution. This Polish Constitution guaranteed, for the first time in history, a great deal of personal freedom, and it separated the executive from the legislative power and the judiciary. It probably was the example for the French Revolution.

This May 3, the anniversary is of special significance. Normally, the occasion of May 3, Polish Constitution Day, is of a joyous nature, but this year, as all of us know, the May 3 celebration will be marred by the recent tragedy three weeks ago of the air disaster killing 96 high

officials of the Polish nation, including the president and his wife.

The Canadian Polish Congress is now planning a special event, and a number of proclamations were issued. Members of Parliament here in Toronto are invited to participate in: (1) a march will take place after 11 a.m. church from the St. Casimir's Church on Roncesvalles down to the Katyn monument on King Street West; (2) the Polish flag-raising ceremony will take place right here at Queen's Park, to which all members are invited.

To the Polish people who are here today to listen to this presentation, I say:

Remarks in Polish.

EARTH DAY

Mr. Ted McMeekin: In honour of Earth Day this year, I spent two days visiting schools handing out over 3,000 white pine seedlings to public school kids. It may be a bit hokey—and, yes, I know that people sometimes tell me I'm a bit hokey—but I don't know when I've enjoyed myself more. You know that feeling, Mr. Speaker.

Kids instinctively get it, maybe because they're small growing things themselves. They have a better intuitive understanding of how important it is to plant and nurture seedlings. None of us should kid ourselves that a few seedlings more or less are going to change the world, but a few ideas planted in the right young minds may do just that—or the right older minds, for that matter. I'm proud that Al Gore has called the McGuinty government "the greenest government in North America."

I want my children, my grandchildren and my grandchildren's children to enjoy the natural beauty and quality of life that we currently enjoy. I know our government shares this belief. That's why we've acted on the greenbelt; that's why we're eliminating coal generation; that's why we brought in the Green Energy Act; and that's why we're working aggressively to plan action to tackle climate change.

As Earth Day approaches next year, I'm going to try to take every single day that I have the opportunity to ask myself: What am I planting? I suggest and ask other members of the assembly to do the same thing.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just want to take this opportunity to welcome some guests: Bob Sirlow, Lou Sirlow, Frank Puopolo, Mark Zannitti, Mike Terrell, Rob Leveille, Jasmin Ralph, Diana Pestaj and James Russell. Welcome to Queen's Park today.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Estimates on the estimates selected and not selected by the standing committee for consideration.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): The Standing Committee on Estimates presents the committee's report as follows.

Pursuant to standing order 60, your committee has selected the estimates—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Dispense? Agreed? Agreed.

I think that was the quickest dispense ever.

Pursuant to standing order 61(b), the report of the committee is deemed to be received and the estimates of the ministries and offices named therein as not being selected for consideration by the committee are deemed to be concurred in.

Report deemed received.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

LOWERING ENERGY COSTS FOR NORTHERN ONTARIANS ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LA RÉDUCTION DES COÛTS D'ÉNERGIE POUR LES ONTARIENS DU NORD

Mr. Duncan moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 44, An Act to implement the Northern Ontario energy credit / Projet de loi 44, Loi mettant en oeuvre le crédit pour les coûts d'énergie dans le Nord de l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The minister for a short statement?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: During ministerial statements.

LABOUR RELATIONS AMENDMENT ACT (REPLACEMENT WORKERS), 2010

LOI DE 2010 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES RELATIONS DE TRAVAIL (TRAVAILLEURS SUPPLÉANTS)

Mme Gélinas moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 45, An Act to amend the Labour Relations Act, 1995 / Projet de loi 45, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1995 sur les relations de travail.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1321 to 1326.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): All those in favour will rise one at a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura

Balkissoon, Bas

Best, Margaret

Bisson, Gilles

Brownell, Jim

Cansfield, Donna H.

Colle, Mike

DiNovo, Cheri

Duncan, Dwight

Dunlop, Garfield

Gélinas, France

Horwath, Andrea

Jaczek, Helena

Jeffrey, Linda

Kormos, Peter

Lalonde, Jean-Marc

Mangat, Amrit

Marchese, Rosario

McMeekin, Ted

Miller, Paul

Moridi, Reza

O'Toole, John

Phillips, Gerry

Prue, Michael

Ramal, Khalil

Rinaldi, Lou

Ruprecht, Tony

Sandals, Liz

Sergio, Mario

Sousa, Charles

Tabuns, Peter

Wynne, Kathleen O.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): All those opposed?

Nays

Arthurs, Wayne

Dickson, Joe

Klees, Frank

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 32; the nays are 3.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I declare the motion carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

M^{me} France Gélinas: The purpose of the bill is to restore the provisions that were incorporated into the Labour Relations Act by the Labour Relations and Employment Statute Law Amendment Act, 1992, and subsequently repealed by the Labour Relations Act, 1995. The purpose of the provisions being restored is to prevent an employer from replacing striking or locked-out employees with replacement workers. The bill allows replacement workers to be used in emergencies.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

NORTHERN ENERGY CREDIT

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I am pleased to rise today to introduce the Lowering Energy Costs for Northern Ontarians Act. This was a key proposal presented in our 2010 budget. The McGuinty government's five-year plan to open Ontario to more jobs and economic growth was

laid out in our recent speech from the throne. Our 2010 budget moves that plan forward in a fair and balanced way. Our plan supports job creation and enhances programs and services that Ontarians value, including education, health care and skills training.

Today, I'm speaking about a new initiative from the budget that is the focus of this bill, the northern Ontario energy credit. We are proposing a new, permanent northern Ontario energy credit that would help eligible low- to middle-income northern residents with their energy costs, as they are generally higher in the north.

Northern residents aged 18 and older who pay rent or property tax for their principal residence would be eligible for an annual credit. A single person would be eligible for a credit of up to \$130, while a family would be eligible for up to \$200. This includes single parents.

We estimate this credit would benefit about a quarter of a million families and single people, or more than half of northern residents, providing about \$35 million in assistance in the first year of implementation.

It would be available across the north to eligible residents in the districts of Algoma; Cochrane; Kenora; Manitoulin; Nipissing; yes, Mr. Miller, Parry Sound; Rainy River; Sudbury; Thunder Bay; and Timiskaming. People living on northern reserves who incur residential energy costs would also be eligible for the credit.

To help those who need it most, the credit would be income-tested. This means it would be reduced for a single person with an adjusted net income of over \$35,000 and eliminated when his or her income exceeds \$48,000. It would be reduced for families with an adjusted family net income over \$45,000 and eliminated when their income is more than \$65,000.

As noted in our recent budget, in order to provide timely assistance, we propose an interim method of payment for this year. Eligible northern residents would apply to the Ministry of Revenue to receive the credit, which would be delivered in two instalments: first, in November 2010, and the second in February 2011. For subsequent years, this permanent credit would be paid quarterly.

I'm proud to say that the McGuinty government's Open Ontario plan is making great strides in lifting the province out of this recession and making Ontario's economy more competitive for when the global recession is over.

I ask the honourable members to support this legislation so that we can move forward and help Ontarians in the north.

FIRE RANGERS

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: It is my pleasure to rise in the House today to ask members to join me in recognizing this year as the 125th anniversary of Ontario's fire rangers.

Forest fires have long been an important factor on Ontario's landscape. Fires are neither good nor bad. They only become so as they relate to human values. In fact,

the province's vast boreal forests are a fire-dependent ecosystem.

The government of the day back in 1849 became concerned about the impact of forest fires in Ontario, but the forest rangers themselves were not appointed until 1885. Jointly funded by the government and the forest industry, the first Ontario rangers patrolled large areas of forest during the burning season, generally the warm, dry summer months.

In those days, settlers often used fire to help them clear land for cultivation, inadvertently causing destructive and often deadly fires. This was the case for the most devastating fire in Ontario's history: the Matheson fire of 1916. It burned 2,000 square kilometres and claimed an estimated 223 lives.

Our rangers helped put out that fire and many others. They also warned settlers, forestry workers and landowners about the dangers of being careless with fire, and they encouraged the government of the day to pass the Forest Fires Prevention Act in 1917. This legislation helped frame and guide our modern fire control system.

In the intervening years, fire rangers have helped us improve our fire control techniques, our understanding of fire dynamics and the types of technology we use and the ways we regulate fire.

Our fire rangers are now better equipped, better trained, more knowledgeable and better supported than those in 1885. Today's Ontario fire rangers have a well-deserved international reputation as highly trained and experienced fire managers and firefighters.

Each year, the ministry employs about 200 four-person fire ranger crews at 38 strategically located fire headquarters and attack bases across the province.

While fighting forest fires is a vital and rewarding job, it's not for everyone. The physical demands are heavy and the work can be exhausting. Rangers live in a tent in the bush for weeks at a time during the summer, cooking their own meals after a hard day's work containing fires.

The training is both challenging and demanding, and it takes a special individual to qualify for the program. But those who do make it say it's one of the most rewarding and satisfying jobs out there.

In addition to protecting Ontario's families, communities and private property from forest fires, our fire rangers have been deployed to many other locations. Just last year, over 700 Ontario fire rangers were sent to help British Columbia and Alberta fire crews with their difficult fire season, and our fire rangers have also helped many US states over the years.

We all owe a debt of gratitude to the men and women who serve our province as fire rangers. It is my pleasure, on behalf of the McGuinty government, to thank all of Ontario's fire rangers, both those serving today and those who have gone before, for helping protect our province since 1885. Our dedicated and hard-working fire rangers deserve our thanks. I'd like to ask all members and all Ontarians to take some time to think about their contributions over the past 125 years.

NORTHERN ENERGY CREDIT

Mr. Norm Miller: It's my pleasure to have an opportunity, in a couple of short minutes, to respond to the introduction of the Lowering Energy Costs for Northern Ontarians Act, 2010. Even though this is a finance bill, I'm sure our energy critic will have some comments to do with the bill as well.

It certainly is the case that the McGuinty government has made a mess of their energy policy, and I would argue that everyone deserves a reduction in their energy bill.

Just yesterday I was on the phone to a constituent from Parry Sound who was asking me questions about why his energy bill is going up so much. I had to say to him, "Do you know what? I'm sorry but all the news is bad." This is good news for the residents of Parry Sound, although if he goes just a little south and happens to be in Muskoka, it won't apply to residents of Muskoka.

However, I had to say to him, "Do you know what? I know your bills are going up, but it's getting worse." The Ontario Energy Board just approved a 10% increase that you haven't seen yet. The HST is going to be coming into effect on July 1, and that's another 8%. So we're up to 18%. Then we have this new green tax that is sort of being brought in through the back door. It's \$57 million. I note from yesterday's Toronto Star that a watchdog group is challenging the government on that one.

They say, "The Consumers Council of Canada has filed a motion with the Ontario Energy Board challenging the levy, saying it amounts to an illegal tax." They go on to say, "Warren said the levy is bad policy as well as bad law. 'These burdens are all really in essence taxes, and they're regressive taxes,' he said. 'They're levied on consumers on the basis of the volume of electricity they use, and not on the basis of their income.'" So that's another addition.

Of course, we have the smart meters, which mysteriously are causing people's energy bills to go up despite the fact that time-of-use pricing has not come into effect. But when time-of-use pricing comes into effect, it's going to mean another substantial increase to everyone's electricity bill.

It will be a couple of years before we see the effect of the Green Energy Act, and for sure—absolutely, definitely—that's going to mean substantial increases in energy bills across the province, reflecting this government's policy of buying high and selling low, and having ratepayers pay for that through their energy bills.

This is a small help for northern residents only. I think all residents are going to need assistance because of the energy policies of this government.

I will let the other critic take over now.

FIRE RANGERS

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm pleased to respond to the Minister of Natural Resources, on behalf of Tim Hudak and the PC caucus, on the 125th anniversary of Ontario's fire rangers. I'd like to begin by congratulating all those

men and women who are part of the Ontario fire rangers, both present and those who have served Ontario in the past.

I picked up on a couple of things the minister talked about. Last year, with the huge fires in British Columbia, it was actually kind of a proud moment to see that we sent so many men and women to BC to help them with those tragic fires that caused so much damage across all of British Columbia. That's the name they've grown and the kind of reputation they've developed, not only in Ontario, but across the country, and at times they've even been in the States to fight fires, to help our American neighbours as well.

I also wanted to point out to the minister one issue that came to my attention from a fire ranger who is a gentleman in my riding. His name is Tom LeBlanc. He has been a fire ranger for the last 25 years. He developed a number of cancers and has tried to fall under the categories of the presumptive legislation that now applies not only to professional firefighters in Ontario, but also, now, to our volunteer firefighters. I'm not quite sure whether he qualifies yet or not, and if there's one thing you can do on this anniversary today, it's to look into any of the fire rangers who have worked with the ministry for years and make sure that they can be covered as well, because it has had quite an impact on his family, and he has had a difficult time. I wanted to bring that up when I saw I had an opportunity to respond today to the 125th anniversary.

1340

In summary, we're pleased to celebrate this day with them. It's an important anniversary in the history of Ontario, particularly northern Ontario, where they do so much of the work. Again, I congratulate them on the 125th anniversary.

FIRE RANGERS

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I am going to respond to both items as critic.

I just want to start off on the 125th anniversary of fire rangers. I want to join, along with Andrea Horwath and the rest of the New Democratic caucus, in celebrating 125 years in Ontario of excellence when it comes to the work that the Ministry of Natural Resources has done through fire rangers and other programs that are in place in order to make our communities safe and in order to try to do what needs to be done when there are forest fires in Ontario.

We are second to none—the minister knows that well; it's probably the first briefing she got when she got her job as Minister of Natural Resources. Ontario leads the way around the world when it comes to the science and technology and the practice of not only fighting forest fires, but being able to predict and mitigate before fires even happen. Some of those technologies are quite amazing once you look at what they are doing.

We just want to say, on behalf of the New Democrats here at Queen's Park and across this province, a thank

you goes out to the fire rangers who have been around for 125 years, and to the Ministry of Natural Resources in the work that they have all done.

NORTHERN ENERGY CREDIT

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I also want to take an opportunity to speak to the bill that was introduced by Minister Duncan, the Lowering Energy Costs for Northern Ontarians Act. Well, tell it to the Xstrata workers. Boy, that did a lot of good. Here we are. The government finally decided to do something on energy, and I'm not going to say you did nothing; you've moved forward with a 25% reduction on the industrial rates for those companies that can apply and get accepted for this particular program. But when we had Xstrata at the table with the Premier, the question was put directly to Xstrata: "Will this help you make your decision to stay within the city of Timmins?" And the answer was a resounding no.

Clearly, it's a step in the right direction. I'm not going to say this is bad. But clearly, the government has not gone the distance that it needs to go to deal with the issue of cost of energy in northern Ontario.

There are a number of things that are going to become even more problematic. We know that there is an application now in order to get a 10% increase on hydro rates this year. The HST will kick in on July 1, putting another 8%—for a total of 18%—on people's hydro bills. So you save 25% if you're one of the lucky ones, but you get tacked on 18%, which means that 25% is fairly negated.

But there's the whole other issue of the global adjustment on Ontario hydro bills. I look at companies such as Tembec in Kapuskasing, Xstrata in Timmins—if they were still operating, and hopefully they will be—and other companies that are large utility customers of Ontario hydro in the province of Ontario—the bills are starting to increase and they will continue to escalate as a result of the global adjustment.

The global adjustment is how the government has decided to pay for all of the energy projects that are currently being constructed in the province of Ontario: the refurbishing of our nuclear reactors, the Niagara project, the green energy that's coming in place—all of which are good things, but the way we're deciding to pay for this is to tack it all in one shot on what's called the global adjustment. That has an effect of increasing hydro prices not only to the consumers but to the industrial users in the province of Ontario. If you think you're paying a lot for electricity now, take a look at where you're going to be a year from now because of global adjustment.

I know that in the case of Tembec in Kapuskasing, it has increased their hydro bill in one month by \$1.8 million. Whereas last year, the global adjustment was basically negative—it was neutral, I should say—they have increased this year in the month of February—the month of January—by \$1.8 million. That's an additional money they've got to pay for hydro to operate their mills.

What it also means is there's no longer an incentive for people to save energy because what you save on one hand you end up paying in the global adjustment.

The government has a very strange policy about how they approach energy prices. There was a time when electricity was seen as one of the competitive advantages to attract and retain large manufacturing in the province of Ontario. How did Xstrata set up their smelter/refinery? Because of the provincial policies at that time that made Kidd Creek do it. How was it made affordable? We were able to provide electricity to companies like Xstrata at cost plus the recuperation of cost for new expansion etc. that needed to be done.

The result was that Ontario's hydro rate, compared to the rest of North America, was most competitive above all. We had the lowest hydro rates in the country and certainly the lowest hydro rates in North America. So it made it possible to make those kinds of investments and to look at the longer term to be able to survive.

This government's hydro policy, quite frankly, is disastrous. At the end, Xstrata is only the tip of the iceberg, because electricity prices are slowly moving people out of the province of Ontario.

PETITIONS

PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Just before I start petitions, there were two petitions that were not approved today. I just want to remind members on both sides of the House that I'm not about to see us get into a battle of duelling petitions in this place. Let's keep these petitions so that they're not making accusations at an individual member or a position of a party.

I'd just ask members to be conscious of it, and we will be monitoring them.

TAXATION

Mr. Norm Miller: Mr. Speaker, I can assure you that my petition has been certified by the table. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Tim Hudak and the Ontario PC caucus support public health care and protecting access to front-line care;

"Whereas Ontario families have already given Dalton McGuinty \$15 billion in health taxes, which was wasted on the \$1-billion eHealth scandal. Now the McGuinty Liberals are cutting front-line public health care and putting independent pharmacies at risk;

"Dalton McGuinty's cuts will:

"—reduce pharmacy hours during evenings and weekends,

"—increase wait times and lineups for patients,

"—increase the out-of-pocket fees people pay for their medication and its delivery,

“—reduce critical patient health care services for seniors and people with chronic illnesses such as diabetes, heart disease and breathing problems;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the McGuinty government stop its cuts to pharmacies.”

I support this petition.

FIREARMS CONTROL

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I have a petition that has been given to me by Mr. Jack Fava and the Symington Avenue association about stopping unlawful firearms in vehicles—that's previous Bill 56—and I'm delighted to read it to you.

It's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it says:

“Whereas the growing number of unlawful firearms in motor vehicles is threatening innocent citizens and our police officers;

“Whereas police officers, military personnel and lawfully licensed persons are the only people allowed to possess firearms; and

“Whereas a growing number of unlawful firearms are transported, smuggled and being found in motor vehicles; and

“Whereas impounding motor vehicles and suspending driver's licences of persons possessing unlawful firearms would aid the police in their efforts to make our streets safer;

“We, the undersigned citizens, strongly request and petition the” Parliament “of Ontario to pass Bill 56, entitled the Unlawful Firearms in Vehicles Act, 2009, into law, so that we can reduce the number of crimes involving unlawful firearms in our communities.”

Since I agree, I'm delighted to sign this petition and send it to you through page Andrew.

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present a petition on behalf my constituents in the riding of Durham. Specifically, a couple of the first signatories here are well-known and well-respected pharmacists in my riding. It reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario government is cutting front-line health care at pharmacies, which could mean higher prices, less service and even more store closures;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Stop the cuts to front-line health care and our pharmacies now.”

This is signed by George Tadros and Mark Borutskie. I'm pleased to sign it, endorse it and support it, and present it to Mitchell, one of the pages, on his last day.

1350

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have a petition from the people of Sudbury and Nickel Belt, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas a company's resumption of production with replacement workers during an illegal strike puts undue tensions and divisions on a community; and

“Whereas anti-replacement legislation in other provinces has reduced the length and divisiveness of labour disputes;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact legislation banning the use of replacement workers during a strike.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the Clerk with Harry on his last day.

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

Mr. Joe Dickson: This is a petition for lowering drug prices.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontarians pay more for popular generic drugs for diabetes, high blood pressure and other common health issues than patients in other jurisdictions; and

“Whereas Ontarians deserve fair prescription drug prices so that families and seniors are not charged more than those in other countries; and

“Whereas some members of the opposition have sided with large corporations to preserve the status quo rather than make prescription medications more affordable for Ontario patients by supporting the proposed drug reforms;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That all members of the Ontario Legislature support Ontarians by passing the government's legislation to lower the cost of prescription medications.”

I will attach my signature to it and pass it to page Max.

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly from the good people of Westport, and I should make mention of Paul Hellier, the owner and pharmacist at the Village Pharmacy in Westport. He has done great things there with physician recruitment. It says:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Tim Hudak and the Ontario PC caucus support public health care and protecting access to front-line care;

“Whereas Ontario families have already given Dalton McGuinty \$15 billion in health taxes, which was wasted on the \$1-billion eHealth scandal. Now the McGuinty

Liberals are cutting front-line public health care and putting independent pharmacies at risk;

The "cuts will:

"—reduce pharmacy hours during evenings and weekends;

"—increase wait times and lineups for patients;

"—increase the out-of-pocket fees people pay for their medication and its delivery; and

"—reduce critical patient health care services for seniors and people with chronic illnesses such as diabetes, heart disease and breathing problems;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government stop its cuts to pharmacies."

I agree with the petition, will affix my name and send it with Carrington to the table.

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have a petition from the people of Sudbury, Nickel Belt and Port Colborne, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the strike at Vale Inco mine, mill and smelter in Sudbury and Port Colborne has been going on for too long and showing no chance of settlement; and

"Whereas the strike is causing hardship on the 3,300 workers, their families, the communities and the businesses and contributing to a significant net drain to the economy; and

"Whereas the resumption of production with replacement workers has demonstrated an unwillingness to negotiate a fair collective agreement with the workers and has produced undue tension in the community; and

"Whereas anti-replacement legislation in other provinces has reduced the length and divisiveness of labour disputes;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact legislation banning the use of replacement workers; and

"Encourage both parties to negotiate and reach a fair settlement."

I support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the table with page Darcy, also on her last day.

IDENTITY THEFT

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I do have one more petition, which I have received from the consumer federation of Canada here on Charles Street in Toronto. It's to the Parliament of Ontario and the Minister of Government Services. It read as follows:

"Whereas identity theft is the fastest-growing crime in North America;

"Whereas confidential and private information is being stolen on a regular basis, affecting literally thousands of people;

"Whereas the cost of this crime exceeds billions of dollars; and

"Whereas countless hours are wasted to restore one's good credit rating;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, demand that Bill 7, which passed the second reading unanimously" in March 2010, "be brought before committee and that the following issues be included for consideration and debate:

"(1) All consumer reports should be provided in a truncated (masked-out) form protecting our vital private information such as SIN and loan account numbers" and other numbers.

"(2) Should a consumer reporting agency discover that there has been an unlawful disclosure of consumer information, the agency should immediately inform the affected consumer.

"(3) The consumer reporting agency shall only report credit inquiry records resulting from actual applications for credit or increase of credit, except in a report given to the consumer.

"(4) The consumer reporting agency shall investigate disputed information within 30 days and correct, supplement or automatically delete any information found unconfirmed, incomplete or inaccurate."

As you know, Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to sign this petition, because I certainly think it's worth it. By the way, I'm going to send it through you. The lovely lady's going to give it to you—that is, Georgina.

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

Mr. Jim Wilson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Tim Hudak and the Ontario PC caucus support public health care and protecting access to front-line care;

"Whereas Ontario families have already given Dalton McGuinty \$15 billion in health taxes, which was wasted on the \$1-billion eHealth scandal. Now the McGuinty Liberals are cutting front-line public health care and putting independent pharmacies at risk;

"Dalton McGuinty's cuts will:

"—reduce pharmacy hours during evenings and weekends,

"—increase wait times and lineups for patients,

"—increase the out-of-pocket fees people pay for their medication and its delivery,

"—reduce critical patient health care services for seniors and people with chronic illnesses such as diabetes, heart disease and breathing problems;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government stop its cuts to pharmacies."

I agree with that petition, and I will sign it.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of Algoma-Manitoulin, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario government is making ... PET scanning a publicly insured health service available to cancer and cardiac patients under" certain conditions...; and

"Whereas" since "October 2009, insured PET scans" are "performed in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

"Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario, with the Sudbury Regional Hospital, its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make PET scans available through the Sudbury Regional Hospital, thereby serving and providing equitable access to the citizens of northeastern Ontario."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the table with page Tara, also on her last day.

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

Mr. John O'Toole: This petition is also from pharmacies and customers. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the citizens of Ontario depend on the convenient, accessible advice and services provided by their community pharmacies; and

"Whereas Ontarians want to ensure their pharmacists are there when they need them; and

"Whereas patients can talk to their pharmacist after work, when they can't get to their doctor's office or when their doctor's office is closed; and

"Whereas Ontarians [want] assurances that their pharmacy will continue to be able to provide valuable health services in their community," face to face;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to please not make cuts to the neighbourhood health care community pharmacies provide."

I am pleased to sign and support this and present it to Darcy, one of the pages, on her last day here at Queen's Park.

TAXATION

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly that reads as follows:

"Whereas residents in Leeds-Grenville do not want the McGuinty 13% sales tax, which will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

"Whereas the McGuinty 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for gasoline for their cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes...; and

"Whereas the McGuinty 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for meals under \$4, haircuts, funeral services, gym memberships, newspapers, and lawyer and accountant fees; and

"Whereas the blended sales tax grab will affect everyone in the province: seniors, students, families and low-income Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty Liberal government not increase taxes for Ontario families."

I will sign the petition and will send it to the table with Georgina.

TAXATION

Mr. John O'Toole: This is the weekend where you can last take advantage of buying things before the HST comes into effect. I have a petition here which reads as follows:

1400

"Whereas Premier Dalton McGuinty is increasing taxes yet again with his new 13% combined sales tax, at a time when families and businesses can least afford it;

"Whereas, by 2010, Dalton McGuinty's new tax will increase the cost of goods and services that families and businesses buy every day. A few examples include: coffee, newspapers and magazines; gas for the car, home heating oil and electricity;" Internet service; "haircuts, dry cleaning and personal grooming; home renovations and home services; veterinary care and pet care; legal services, the sale of resale homes, and funeral arrangements;

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty promised he wouldn't raise taxes in the 2003 election. However, in 2004, he brought in the health tax, which costs upwards of \$600 to \$900 per individual. And now he is raising our taxes again;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Dalton McGuinty government wake up to Ontario's current economic reality and stop raising taxes on Ontario's hard-working families and businesses."

I am pleased to sign and support this and present it to Khaleel on his last day at Queen's Park. He has done a great job, too.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

HEALTHY LIVING

SAINES HABITUDES DE VIE

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: It's a privilege to rise to present this private member's resolution on Ontario vital stats, that the government of Ontario encourage Ontarians and initiate programs to know their vital numbers: cholesterol levels, sugar, iron, weight, body mass index, waist circumference and calcium status; and that the government of Ontario encourage Ontarians and initiate programs to know their cardiometabolic risk.

Ma résolution est sur les statistiques vitales des Ontariens et Ontariennes. Le gouvernement de l'Ontario encourage les Ontariennes et Ontariens et initie des programmes pour connaître leurs statistiques vitales, notamment, le niveau de cholestérol, le sucre, le fer, le poids du corps, la circonférence de l'hanche et l'état de calcium. Le gouvernement encourage les Ontariens et Ontariennes et initie des programmes pour connaître leur risque cardiométabolique.

Les principes : les docteurs estiment—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Qaadri moves private member's notice of motion number 23. Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: It's a privilege to present the Ontario vital stats resolution, as I have just cited.

Cette résolution est basée sur des principes fondamentaux. Par exemple, les docteurs estiment qu'entre 10 % et 40 % des conditions médicales majeures restent non diagnostiquées pendant longtemps. Par exemple, les diabétiques au Canada ont cette maladie en moyenne cinq ans avant qu'elle ne soit diagnostiquée.

This particular resolution with reference to Ontario vital statistics is based of course—I hope—on sound medical and scientific principles. For example, doctors estimate that about 10% to 40% of major medical conditions remain undiagnosed for too long. For example, people with diabetes in Canada have the disease, on average, for five years before it is actually diagnosed. Similarly, approximately five million Canadians have high blood pressure, but only about 45% of them have actually officially been diagnosed. As a general principle, as you will appreciate, early diagnosis leads to earlier cure, faster resolution and, of course, better outcomes for patients. But Ontarians are not benefiting as much as they should from these particular principles of early awareness and early intervention.

I'm also pleased to report to this chamber that I will be joined today in the debate from the government side by my honourable colleagues MPP Kular from Bramalea-Gore-Malton, MPP Ramal from London-Fanshawe and MPP McMeekin from Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Westdale.

I'd also like to introduce, not only to you perhaps, Speaker, but also to Ontarians, a term that is gaining currency within medical circles, and that is known now as the cardiometabolic risk. I think it's important for all Ontarians to understand—and for patients and physicians to engage in this particular conversation—what we as physicians are increasingly referring to as the cardiometabolic syndrome. And that is this: We are learning that many illnesses and conditions are not isolated, are not just single problems. Instead, many conditions such as obesity, high blood pressure and stress, actually aggravate, provoke and accentuate each other. This grouping, this cluster of conditions which act and worsen each other is what we call the cardiometabolic syndrome. And to appreciate what I'm saying, it's that I think for too long conventional western medicine, not really

engaging in the holistic approach, has been chasing blood pressure, sugar, stress, insomnia or increased heart rates as isolated, independent conditions. But we as physicians are learning that that is not the optimal approach; that we must approach this as an overall package deal, as it were, as what we call now the cardiometabolic syndrome.

Why is this important? As I say, it's a package, and patients who have this particular syndrome are at much higher risk for many, many serious conditions. As you'll appreciate, the number, the proportion of Ontarians—indeed Canadians and, by the way, particularly Americans—is increasing in this area for many, many different reasons: sedentary lifestyles, excessive screen time, the outbreak of obesity right from very early ages and many other aspects. This puts people at much higher risk for things like heart attacks, strokes, complications of diabetes, and even sudden cardiac death.

We must try to address all aspects of CMS—as the official abbreviation is—or the cardiometabolic syndrome, because of course, as you know, any resolution and any medical terminology must have a self-respecting acronym, so CMS is the one that we put forward. It's not enough, for example, to chase only high blood pressure or only high sugar levels; we must instead try to offer solutions and medications that offer a global benefit, a holistic benefit to the whole person. And that may involve, as it should, much more than simply prescribing medications, be they generic or brand name, but engaging not only the patient, educating them about the entire lifestyle, but even engaging the entire family and maybe the spouse, and perhaps even society at large. I think all of us in our various spheres of influence need to bring best practices to bear in this area. Otherwise, the benefit of treating only one condition at a time may in fact be nullified, cancelled out or diminished as another condition is allowed to get worse.

For example, the list of conditions that mutually reinforce each other is always literally and figuratively expanding. It includes obesity. Fat in the abdomen is dangerous. It acts—and this is probably relatively new information even for physicians out there—like an independent endocrine organ that makes chemicals that accelerate many problems. This is in fact what I like to refer to, as I'm explaining it to patients or other physicians in presentation, as the cardiometabolic soup: the collection of chemicals that abdominal fat pours out that worsens, accelerates and triggers things like high blood pressure, high cholesterol, sugar diabetes and so on. Remember, abdominal fat is metabolically, chemically active and dangerous.

High blood pressure. This, as you'll appreciate, is a silent, ticking time bomb. One of the problems in high blood pressure patients, in hypertensive patients is what we call the activation of the blood pressure control system in the body called the RAAS, or the renin-angiotensin-aldosterone system. When this system is activated, people are at an accelerated risk for heart attacks, strokes, kidney failure and so on. But we can measure these things. We can track these things. We can

monitor these things over time. And I think it's important, as patients get into the realm of potentially developing high blood pressure—or even if they have it—if their family members have had these conditions or members of the family have actually had heart attacks or strokes and similar conditions, those are the very group of people who need to come to attention.

1410

Elevated cholesterol: hugely important, of course, as cholesterol is, as a building block of atherosclerosis, or hardening of the arteries—that's hardening of the arteries, Speaker, not hardening of the categories, which of course is something that happens sometimes here in this chamber. That's essentially, as you'll know, pipes getting blocked. The specific abnormalities include making the bad cholesterol, or LDL cholesterol, even worse—we've got to lower that; and elevating the good cholesterol, or what's known as HDL cholesterol, because that is actually protective. Of course, there are many aspects and sub-aspects with regard to cholesterol.

Diabetes, as you'll appreciate, is a massive epidemic and continues to be so, not only in Ontario but beyond. Unfortunately, as physicians, we're seeing patients who we thought had to be in good and appropriate vintage years, in middle age—whatever middle age means now, whether it's 40, 45, 50 or later—earlier. Now we're seeing patients in their 20s who are getting these conditions. Formerly we thought they would have at least a 20-year lead time.

Several of these chemicals that the abdominal fat pours out make your body essentially ignore its own insulin, which is of course the regulatory hormone for sugar in the body. Obviously, as physicians have fancy and billable words, that's called insulin resistance. Essentially, your body resists the effects of its own insulin, so sugars stay high and patients therefore open themselves up to many complications, which include diseases of the heart, kidney, eyes, nerves, blood vessels and cells, and even protein spilling out from various organs.

Essentially, if I can summarize it in a way that perhaps even our pages are going to appreciate, as it is their last day, basically when you have elevated sugar, your blood, instead of being watery, turns to various levels of pancake syrup. If you have pancake syrup floating around in your bloodstream, of course it moves sluggishly; it moves more viscously, if I can use that word; and of course it begins to cake out, to actually crystallize. Just as you have a candy-coated apple, you're going to have a candy-coated or sugar-coated heart, kidney, eye, nerve, blood vessels and so on. You can imagine the implications that would have, on an ongoing basis, as you essentially incubate that situation for years and years.

One of the things that's very important along with having this excess amount of abdominal fat is that it promotes what we call a pro-inflammatory state. That means the body essentially engages in friendly fire. It gets angry. The immune system goes into overdrive and attempts to remedy the situation but actually makes

things worse. For example, many cells and chemicals in the body are meant to attack outside invaders like debris and bacteria, but unfortunately, when the system goes into overdrive, the defences begin to attack the host. That's what we call the self-inflammatory or pro-inflammatory state.

The other thing that's extremely important, and that I think physicians are perhaps just recently waking up to, becoming alert to, is the idea that cardiometabolic syndrome is not just a bad sugar number, a bad cholesterol number or a bad blood pressure number, important as those may be. These actually have very significant effects on the mood, on an individual's outlook, on their energy, on their ambition. For example, it is becoming clearer that it affects energy levels, and it may in fact be setting patients up for either mild, medium or severe depression. Mood effects, of course, happen for many causes, but hormones, such as things like testosterone and estrogen, are actually also negatively impacted by the excess amount of abdominal fat.

All of these together are the cluster of conditions, the cluster of issues, that we, as physicians, now are referring to as the cardiometabolic syndrome.

There was, for example, just to make the point clearer, a very important book that began to synthesize this idea of a grouping of conditions. It was released in the United States and was called *Diabesity*: a contraction between diabetes and, of course, obesity, and essentially that clustering of effects that goes on.

Heart disease, in its broader sense, still remains Canada's number one killer. For us as legislators, and as representatives of our constituents on the ground, and of course for those of us who have the opportunity to frame, shape and influence health policy not only in Ontario but of other jurisdictions that continue to look to Ontario for leadership, it's important that we know about these issues, particularly when we're referring to Ontario's vital statistics with reference to cholesterol, sugar, iron, weight, body mass index, waist circumference and calcium status, all in an effort for Ontarians to realize their cardiometabolic risk.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm pleased to support the motion that has been put forward by the member for Etobicoke North. He is a qualified physician, and I think the resolution regarding Ontario's vital statistics and the importance of people being knowledgeable about those statistics is very important because I think for a long time now we have been trying to shift the focus of health care to prevention and health promotion. It's very important that people in the province of Ontario focus on that, as opposed to sickness.

It's also very important that people start to assume greater responsibility for their own good health. In order to focus on your own good health and preventing disease and promoting good health, people need to know some of the facts. This particular resolution does encourage Ontarians to initiate programs and, really, that they should

know their own vital numbers: their cholesterol levels, their sugar, their iron, their weight, their body mass index, their waist circumference, their calcium status.

The member has talked at some length today about the government of Ontario encouraging Ontarians and initiating programs in order that people would know their own cardiometabolic risk. He did explain, I think, in great detail, what that means.

I think it's interesting, and some of the stats that he shared with us certainly indicate, that doctors are now saying that 10% to 40% of major medical conditions are simply remaining undiagnosed for too long a time. If we had known earlier, obviously some of the serious consequences of these conditions could have been avoided, and individuals could be enjoying a much better quality of life.

I think one of the diseases where we've seen a great deal of increase in the numbers of people who are suffering and, of course, as a result, some of the unfortunate consequences that go with it, is in diabetes. There are simply too many people suffering from diabetes who could have been diagnosed on average, apparently, maybe up to five years before. As well, it says that we have approximately five million Canadians who have high blood pressure, but again only 45% of them are being diagnosed.

It is important that people take responsibility for their own good health, that they do what they can and the government supports them in obtaining information about their own vital numbers, because early diagnosis always leads to an earlier cure and the prevention of a chronic condition; it also allows for a faster resolution and, of course, at the end of the day, much better outcomes for patients.

So we have to do a much better job in the province of Ontario. We need to see leadership from the government. But again, people need to assume personal responsibility in order to have the best health possible.

Now, I'm not going to go into the cardiometabolic syndrome. I think the member did a great job in explaining what it was; the fact that some conditions, unfortunately, have an impact on one another. He talked about the fact that obesity, fat in the abdomen, is dangerous; and, increasingly, we are seeing more and more people who are diagnosed as being obese. I'm going to come back to that if I have time.

He talked about high blood pressure being the silent ticking time bomb. Again, we know that people then have an elevated risk of heart attacks, strokes, kidney failure and so on. He talked about the impact of the elevated cholesterol levels. Again, we know that that results in plaque accumulation and hardened arteries etc. And, of course, he did go into some description of diabetes and what happens to the body. Again, if we don't diagnose that early, we know that there are heart problems that are going to result. The brain can be impacted, and other parts of the body as well. Promoting inflammation: This can result in cardiovascular problems. He talked about some of the mood effects. I guess, at the

end of the day, his presentation did emphasize that these were some of the leading items of the cardiometabolic syndrome. We need to be aware of that.

1420

It was stressed that heart disease is still Canada's number one killer. It can be prevented, but a lot of people are simply not getting the message. It is important that people learn what the signals are, that they take appropriate action, that they be tested, and whatever the physician would recommend for them to do as a consequence they would do in order that they can protect themselves.

If we take a look at the issue of diabetes—which is, I think, sometimes still somewhat poorly understood—it can have many serious consequences. When I was Minister of Health, this was one of the diseases that we saw that was going to increasingly have a negative impact on the quality of life of people of the province of Ontario. If it's left undiagnosed, it—and even when it's diagnosed, depending on how much responsibility people assume for responding to the disease—we see kidney disease; we see, sometimes, the need for amputations; and there's also visual impairment. But it is very, very serious, and people need to understand the risks involved.

The other new statistic that people increasingly are talking about is waist circumference. This is kind of a new vital sign. When you pick up magazines and newspapers, people are increasingly talking about how much fat you have in your abdominal area. Sometimes that's referred to as the “beer belly,” “love handles” or “tire in the stomach,” but they are now increasingly saying that the amount of fat that you have in your abdomen is a major predictor of any future diseases that you might have. So it's important for people to understand what is considered normal and then to take a look at where their waist is and be able to identify if they are overweight. I think one of the greatest threats that faces us today in Canada, in Ontario and in North America is the increasing number of children we see who are obese. Obviously, there is a need to take action.

Another issue—and this is more for women—is the whole issue of preventing and treating osteoporosis, which is really important. This is knowing what your calcium levels are because, if they are inadequate, this can predispose people to a huge range of bone problems, including osteoporosis, which is simply a thinning of the bones. It seems to impact people, in particular, over the age of 50.

I applaud the member for bringing this forward, and certainly I support his resolution.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Kuldip Kular: It's my pleasure to join the debate on the private member's resolution on Ontarians' vital stats, brought forward by my physician colleague the honourable member from Etobicoke North. Let me say at the start that I'm truly supporting this resolution.

As a physician, I know that in general, early diagnosis of any disease leads to an early cure. Early diagnosis

leads to faster resolution of the disease and leads to better outcomes for the patient. I feel that it also leads to better health care delivery.

Many physicians agree. As has been talked about by the honourable member from Etobicoke North, 10% to 40% of major medical conditions remain undiagnosed for some time. A prime example is that it takes almost five years before people come to be fully diagnosed as diabetic. Osteoporosis is another example. It takes some time before the patient starts to feel the symptoms and consequences of osteoporosis.

So I feel this is a very important resolution. If passed, this resolution would help Ontarians, as they can benefit by knowing their own vital stats and their own key medical numbers. The honourable member from Etobicoke North has talked very clearly about all the vital stats mentioned in the resolution and also about cardiometabolic syndrome.

In the short time I have, I'm going to be speaking only on two important vital stats that he mentioned in his resolution. The first is iron. Iron is very, very important for the hemoglobin level in your body. It is very important to have adequate levels of hemoglobin in your blood, which helps with oxygen saturation. If your oxygen saturation is not sufficient, your body is literally starved of oxygen. When people are anemic—about 5% to 10% of Canadian women are anemic—they don't have high enough hemoglobin in their blood; they don't have high enough levels of iron in their blood. So when they have anemia—the most common type of anemia is iron deficiency anemia—they feel fatigued, weak and short of breath. If they understood the level of iron they should have in their body, they would try to get adequate levels of iron supplements.

I think this is a good resolution, and I ask all members on both sides of the House to support this resolution so that people can be very well aware of their vitals to have a healthy lifestyle.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm happy to respond to the member from Etobicoke North, and I respectfully acknowledge that he is a medical doctor. I believe his ethical purpose here is very much supported by all members.

Former Minister of Health Elizabeth Witmer responded adequately on our behalf, but I do want to say that today the idea of personal responsibility in terms of health is important, and that means a really wide working relationship with your physician.

It's funny: I was out of the House for a few minutes, down to the public hearings on Bill 16, the budget bill, and the room was full of pharmacists, all outraged about the approach of this government, really the attack on patients, consumers and customers who are going to have their services exposed and potentially reduced in the name of the government bill. It's ironic, and it's no disrespect to the member here. It could not have been any more comfortable for him as a physician trying to prescribe the right drug at the right time for the right

reasons, and I'm sure he is a partner with the pharmacists. The pharmacists themselves are health care providers, to the extent that they take, I guess, four years of pharmacology. There are two or three doctors here today who probably know the amount of pharmacology studied by family practitioners; probably a number of hours.

1430

I think it's important, when you look at the number of tests that you're looking at—the body mass index is one that I'm familiar with. I've just had that. I have some work to do in that category. It's all related to disease, and chronic disease is the fastest-growing component of health care expense.

Diabetes is a chronic disease that's epidemic in proportion. The number of people who are diagnosed with case 1 or case 2 is actually depressing, really, and it is a function of diet. It's a function of eating and drinking in moderation.

Almost everyone here of my generation—some may not be as sick as I am, but the point is that almost everyone here would have some exposure to a medication that's supposed to be working in your favour. That, for instance, would be cholesterol and taking some medication for that, even if it's a five- or 10-milligram dose. I had a little contest with my doctor. I said, "Gee, I just want the diet. I eat oatmeal. I don't eat sugar. I don't smoke. I don't drink very much." I'm sort of saying, why can't we do these things with natural processes?

So doctors and their tests are very important, and I think personal responsibility in health care is also important.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'm delighted and honoured to stand up and speak in support of the resolution by my colleague the member from Etobicoke North, my seat-mate. No doubt about it, I'm lucky: I sit beside a doctor and I'm married to a doctor, so when I get into trouble or have some kind of issue, I go, when I'm here, and ask my friend and when I'm at home I ask my wife.

It's very important to recognize this issue in the House. I think he's brought to us a very important issue, which is to encourage the government to encourage Ontarians to initiate a program to know their vital numbers for cholesterol, sugar levels, weight, calcium and many other things. It's important. As he mentioned—I was listening to him carefully—when he talked about obesity, diabetes, sugar levels and blood pressure, all these elements, if we are able to diagnose them early, I think we will be able to solve problems or create some kind of mechanism to lower the impact on patients before the problem escalates and becomes a permanent problem. Also, the damage will be greater and it will be difficult and expensive to cure and solve.

I think it's important to bring these issues, as he mentioned. As elected officials in this place, our duty and obligation—especially as a doctor, I think his ethical duty and responsibility—is to create awareness and send a

message across Ontario, and also to encourage the government and this place to adopt a method, a policy, to help Ontarians from getting into trouble in the future.

Again, the member from Durham was talking about pharmacists. I want to take the opportunity to acknowledge the presence of two prominent Ontario pharmacists: Michael Nashat and Hesham Abdel Sayid, who came specifically to listen to Dr. Qaadri speak about this important issue. They know that the pharmacies in Ontario, especially independent pharmacists, are connected very well with the community. They keep advising the community on a regular basis on many different issues. As you know, when you go to a doctor they might prescribe a medication to you, and then you go after to the pharmacy and the pharmacist explains to you how you use those medications: what's the best method to use them in order to keep yourself healthy; how to use the medication in a professional manner, without hurting yourself; and how to get the benefit from the medications.

So to the member from Etobicoke North, I want to congratulate you for bringing this issue to us and educating us, on a regular basis in this place, about the best methods that we should use, how we can educate Ontarians about their lifestyles, and the vital importance for the people of Ontario to know exactly what kind of health status they are in in order to cure themselves or protect themselves from further damage.

Again, I want to congratulate the member. I wish that all the members in the House, from both sides, support this resolution, because it's important to create a health mechanism to lower the impact on our health care costs and to keep our population healthy and in good shape. So again, thank you for allowing me to speak.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

M^{me} France G  linas: It's my pleasure to add a few comments to the motion by the member from Etobicoke North.

It reads as follows: "That, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should encourage Ontarians and initiate programs to know their vital numbers: cholesterol levels, sugar, iron, weight, body mass index, waist circumference, calcium status and to know their cardiometabolic risk."

I would certainly vote in support of this motion. This is something that goes very much in line with what the NDP has been talking about for a long time, what we call the second stage of medicare, keeping people healthy.

We have a health care system in Ontario that we can all be proud of. There's room for improvement, but we have a very good health care system in Ontario. People have to realize that the system is there to treat people once they're sick. This is what it does. But there is much work to be done to help to keep people healthy and keep them from developing sickness and disease in the first place.

If you look at the statistics, the four pillars of health promotion have to do with a healthy weight—and

certainly this motion talks to this. It talks about your weight, your body mass and your waist circumference—I have a hard time with this word. *Circonf  rence de la taille*—it comes out a lot easier. Waist circumference is what I'm trying to say.

The second pillar of health promotion, after healthy weight, is healthy eating. You have to look at the type of food that you eat, and some of the numbers in his motion talk to this. When you talk about cholesterol levels and sugar and iron, they're directly related to a healthy diet. A healthy diet will allow most people to keep their cholesterol in check so they don't have to take medication.

We also talk about stopping smoking. This is another pillar of health promotion. It's not specifically covered by the motion from the member from Etobicoke North, but it's certainly heading in that direction.

We also talk about stress. Stress has multiple consequences, like poor health, for people. Here again, it goes in the same direction as what the member has been talking about.

We hear and we read in the news often that the cost of health care is escalating. We now have a \$42-billion health care budget. We're looking at 48% of every dollar of expenditure being spent on health care. But the part of this that is there to help people stay healthy is very small.

The member talks about issues where the person can and should make a difference. We all have a role to play. Your health care provider, being a nurse practitioner or a physician, can help you, but at the end of the day, much can be done by people themselves. We all have a responsibility to keep ourselves healthy. A part of keeping ourselves healthy has to do with knowledge about oneself. I would add to the list that is there that you should know how many minutes of exercise you should do for your age group and make sure that you meet those targets.

On Monday of this week, Active Healthy Kids Canada released its report showing that only 12% of the kids in Canada and 14% of the kids in Ontario get the recommended amount of exercise. This is also something that people should take responsibility for. Exercise, fitness, is one of the key pillars of health promotion. It would help keep each and every one of us leading healthier, more productive lives and, at the same time, help curb what we call this steep, rising cost of our health care system.

1440

We also learned through this report that not only are the kids not doing enough exercise, but opportunities are not offered to them. If you ask the kids if they want to be active, 74% of them say yes, according to the study, but only 12%—14% in Ontario—get to be active. The government has to start putting a lens to the policies that go through, what I would call a "determinants of health" lens, so that the next time a municipal government gives out a licence to build a new neighbourhood, it makes sure it has a sidewalk.

If you have a sidewalk, then new parents with a stroller will go for a walk. This will have a direct impact

on their weight. It will have a direct impact on their body mass index, on their circumference, which I have such a hard time with, and probably on their calcium status as well if you drink a little bit of milk after your walk.

If you build your neighbourhood with sidewalks, older people will also go for a stroll. It will help keep people healthy that way. But when the opportunities are not there, when you live in a neighbourhood that has no sidewalks, that means that people go directly from their house to their car to wherever they're going.

It's the same thing with neighbourhoods that don't have parks for people to play in. Here in Toronto, most people live in apartments and high-rises. If you don't have access to a park, it's pretty hard for kids to be physically active.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I am sitting here listening very intently to this fine presentation, but I believe there may not be enough people in this Legislature to have a quorum to listen to it. So I would ask the Speaker to check.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I'd ask the table if we have a quorum.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): A quorum is present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member for Nickel Belt has the floor.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I may not have a large audience, but I have a captive one, and they're listening very intensely.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: That's why it's so important to have a large one, too. It's an important speech.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would hope so.

We were talking about other ways. If you look at the opportunities offered through the Ministry of Education, right now kids get 20 minutes of physical activity a day. This is not enough. Little kids need at least two hours of physical activity every day. Primary school kids need at least 90 minutes of physical activity every day.

We would certainly like schools to make it easier for groups to use the school grounds and facilities so that we can use those facilities that belong to the people of Ontario to keep our population healthy.

The government also has a role to play. It's important that all of them work together to achieve some of the data that the member would like us to focus on.

The other one I wanted to focus on is the one linked to healthy eating. The member says that you should know your vital numbers when it comes to cholesterol levels, sugar, iron and calcium. Those are directly linked to healthy eating.

The first thing I'd like to bring forward—because whenever I have the opportunity, I do—is my private member's bill Healthy Decisions for Healthy Eating. This was a private member's bill, and all it does is ask for calorie labelling on menu boards so that basically, when you go to any of the big restaurant chains, whether it be McDonald's, Subway or whatever, not only would you see the name of the sandwich; you would also see the calories within.

This is not something avant-garde. This is something that happens in 32 states in the United States, and this is something that has been in front of the Legislature of Ontario for over a year now. Unfortunately, it got erased when we prorogued.

Those are the little steps that make it easier. To give you an example: If you go to—we'll leave it nameless—a restaurant, a lot of people will say, "Oh, they have a tuna melt. I'll take tuna, because it's fish. Omega-3: It must be good for me." Did you know that a tuna melt has 1,280 calories? When you compare this to a normal sandwich, a normal sandwich has about 350 to 375 calories. So here, because the information is not available, people think they are making a healthy choice by choosing the tuna melt, when really they are making a disastrous choice, because the number of calories is way too high. This is often half to three quarters of your calorie intake for the day. It will have a direct impact on your waist, believe me, and it will be on the expanding side of your waist, to the point where, if you go to the States now, with the same restaurant chain, the sandwich is not there on the menu board any more. It's not there because once people started to see it, they made healthy decisions for healthy eating. Those are small steps that don't cost the government anything and that would help to improve those vital numbers.

Right now, this information is available, but it's available either in a pamphlet under the desk someplace, it's available on your way to the washroom or something like this. The way we have it in Ontario, one out of 1,000 people uses that information to make healthy decisions. Once it's on the menu board, it's one out of two; every second person uses that information to make a healthy decision, a healthy choice for healthy eating.

I see that my time is running out. I fully support the direction this member is taking to help people take responsibility for their own health, to help people know some of their vital statistics. You're certainly welcome to talk to your primary care provider—your nurse practitioner or your physician—about it, but at the end of the day, it is your responsibility and you should know what it is so that you can monitor it and you can make sure that it stays within the healthy range. I will be supporting the motion from the member.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Ted McMeekin: I want to thank the honourable member from Etobicoke North for bringing forward this very important initiative. The member from Nickel Belt has trouble with the word "circumference." I have trouble with the whole concept of circumference. I've been a poster child, I can say with some truthfulness, until recently, for poor health.

I discovered a while back at a community health clinic that I was a diabetic. There was a young man there who was afraid to get his finger pricked with the needle, and somebody said, "Oh, MPP McMeekin isn't afraid to get his blood sugar checked," and it came back at 28—Dr. Hoskins, 28. I was feeling tired. I had been feeling tired

for a while but was ignoring it. I just figured it was the job here running me down. Right? It can run you down. You can be tired from overworking too.

It has been said that good judgment is based on experience and experience invariably on bad judgment; or, as Mum used to say, "If you're smart, learn from your mistakes; try not to make the same mistakes twice."

Having been touched personally with the issue of diabetes, I take testing of all of the measures that the good doctor mentioned far more seriously now. I'm not on any more of these fad diets; I'm quite happy to lose a pound a week instead of 10 pounds in a couple of days. It's about style, about how you eat and how you take care of yourself. Certainly the cardiometabolic risk that the good member from Etobicoke North mentioned is significant. We need, in response to that, to be making the kinds of lifestyle changes that we know in our heads are the right thing to do. It's tough. I've got to tell you, it's tougher at 62 than when I was an athletic 35 and playing soccer all the time and in karate class and all that sort of stuff. It's tougher at 62, but it's important. There's never a wrong time to do the right thing. Right? Anyhow, I wanted to say that.

Unfortunately, many Ontarians are unaware of just how important their cholesterol levels, sugar, iron, weight, body mass index etc. are. I think there's much to be said for the old adage, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." I think that monitoring one's health, taking that as a personal responsibility, is really quite critical if we're to survive and thrive, which, on a good day, is what we all want to do.

1450

I'm a type 2 diabetic; I really have to watch very carefully things like circumference and diet. I blood test sometimes several times a day to make sure I'm on track. It's helpful for me now to be doing that, and hopefully not too late in my life. I want to suggest that we need to try to imagine the time, money and stress that could be saved if people could simply practise early intervention by knowing their vital stats and by making sure that they are on top of that.

Our government has taken a number of initiatives on the health promotion/educational front, and those are important. I think the initiative that is being taken by the honourable member today certainly stands in that category.

Another measure the good doctor didn't mention, and it's probably not directly applicable here, is PSA. Some people debate about PSA testing, but if you've got a baseline, I've discovered—your PSA doesn't necessarily have to be high, but if the increase is dramatic, you go and you get tested and sometimes you get bad news.

So I support the good member from Etobicoke North, and hope and expect everyone else in this House will as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time for debate has expired. The honourable member, Mr. Qaadri, has up to two minutes for his response.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Of course, I thank my various colleagues, MPPs Kular, Ramal and McMeekin, et vous

aussi, madame Gélinas, représentante de la circonscription de Nickel Belt, pour votre soutien et aussi pour avoir souligné la terminologie « circonférence de la taille ».

I, of course, thank former Minister of Health Elizabeth Witmer, whose always gracious remarks are partisan when necessary, but not always necessarily partisan.

And even to you, sir, MPP O'Toole from Durham, for your, let me say, wholehearted if occasionally strained support as well: I welcome it.

I would just like to very briefly not only acknowledge the support of this House, but look forward to the implementation on the ground. I wanted to very briefly just re-emphasize the idea that we should engage in the conversation. I hope Ontarians grasp this idea of cardiometabolic risk, the idea that this is a package deal, a clustering of conditions. Physicians are not just waiting now for patients to be diagnosed, by the way, with diabetes, but with pre-diabetes; not with hypertension or high blood pressure, but with pre-hypertension. We need to access patients and their bloodstreams in order to optimize therapy as time goes on.

Again, very briefly, there are particular numbers—for example, things like waist circumference, waist measurements—and a piece of new information that they are out there teaching physicians is that these numbers, these cut-off numbers, differ depending upon ethnicity. There are different numbers, different cut-off zones, for European, Caucasian, South Asian, Chinese, Japanese, South-Central American, Middle Eastern and so on. I would encourage all patients, all Ontarians, all Canadians to learn those numbers.

Iron—something on the order of about 5% to 10% of patients in Canada of both genders are iron-deficient.

I welcome the support for the government of Ontario to move forward on this resolution.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We'll vote on Mr. Qaadri's ballot item in about 100 minutes.

BRITISH HOME CHILD DAY ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LE JOUR DES PETITS IMMIGRÉS BRITANNIQUES

Mr. Brownell moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 12, An Act to proclaim British Home Child Day /
Projet de loi 12, Loi proclamant le Jour des petits
immigrés britanniques.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Pursuant to standing order 98, the honourable member has up to 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Jim Brownell: It is my pleasure to rise in the House today to speak on Bill 12, an act to proclaim September 28 in each year as British Home Child Day, and to share with my colleagues a story that few Canadians know anything about. It is a story about cour-

age, strength and perseverance. It is a story of Canada's British home children.

At the outset, I would like to introduce descendants and friends of these home children, descendants whose ancestors came from the Quarrier's home in Bridge of Weir, Scotland. We have here today Sandra Joyce, whose father, Robert Joyce, was at Quarrier's; Sandy and Victoria Drysdale—Sandy's father, James Drysdale, was at Quarrier's home; June and Keith McKey—June's mother, Christina Myles, and uncle James Myles, were at Quarrier's. I really want to thank June for providing the little Bibles given to your mother and uncle as they left Glasgow.

We have Lynda Burke, along with her brother Fred Wardle and his wife, Susan. It was Lynda's and Fred's mother—her name was Catherine McCallum. They were at the Bridge of Weir's Quarrier's orphanage.

Also we have friends here. We have Grant Bridge and John Hynes, and they are Friends of the British Home Child.

Between 1869 and 1939, about 100,000 children were sent to Canada from Great Britain, many of them to work as farm labourers and domestics in homes in Ontario and across Canada. These were the British home children, boys and girls anywhere from six months to 18 years of age.

They were part of the child emigration movement. Most of them came from orphanages or other institutions, such as the Maryhill Industrial School in Glasgow, Scotland, an institution known to my grandmother.

For a variety of reasons, the children were sent to Canada, particularly Ontario, as we were a growing economy and in need of labourers. Officials believed these children would be better off in a new land, with fresh air and wide-open green spaces.

Most of the children were transported by British religious and charitable organizations. For the most part, these organizations believed that they were doing a good and noble thing for the children, who were worse off living in poverty in Great Britain.

In reflecting on the home children of Ontario, we think about the work of Dr. Thomas John Barnardo, the energetic founder of the Barnardo's Homes that placed 30,000 children in Ontario. We think of Maria Rye, who brought the first group of British home children to Canada in 1869 and housed them in a refurbished jail near Niagara-on-the-Lake. We remember the Annie MacPherson Home, originally opened in Galt, Ontario, in 1871, then moved to Stratford, Ontario, in 1883.

James Fegan was the founder of Mr. Fegan's Home for Boys in North Buckinghamshire, England, and in other communities throughout England. He had a distributing centre at 295 George Street, here in Toronto.

To my family, William Quarrier is remembered as the founder of the Orphans Homes of Scotland, having sent over 7,000 Scottish children to Canada from Quarrier's Village at Bridge of Weir, just outside Glasgow, between 1871 and 1938.

It was from Fairknowe Home, Quarrier's receiving home in Brockville, Ontario, that my grandmother Mary

Scott Pearson and great-aunt Margaret Scott Pearson, were sent out as domestics in Ontario homes.

As for my grandmother, she was just 42 days shy of her 14th birthday when she arrived as an orphan at Halifax, Nova Scotia, aboard the S.S. Hibernian, on September 28, 1891. After spending some time in cottage 10 at Quarrier's Village, her sister, Maggie, departed from Greenock, Scotland, aboard the S.S. Pomeranian four years later, in 1894. Fortunately for these two young orphans, they were to be reunited in eastern Ontario before Maggie departed with her husband to homestead in Manitoba.

The story of the British home child is one of challenge, determination and perseverance. Many home children faced adversity; most were able to overcome it, but it was by no means easy. The British home child faced considerable challenges, and some experienced tremendous hardships. They were susceptible to mistreatment because their living conditions were not closely monitored.

Arriving in Ontario with their worldly possessions tucked into little wooden trunks, siblings were often separated upon their arrival, and many never saw each other again. This is an important part of their story that deserves to be told.

In further research for this presentation today, I discovered that an outstanding Canadian author, Jean Little, did just that. She told the story of the British home child in her Dear Canada book titled *Orphan at My Door*, a book that received the CLA Book of the Year award in 2001.

Described by many as a national treasure, Jean Little allows young readers—and those not so young, I might say—an opportunity to step into the life of Victoria Cope, through the diary pages that she began on her 11th birthday, in 1897. The family took in a home child, an orphan from England, to help with the housework. A small, quiet 12-year-old girl named Mary Anna Wilson enters Victoria's life, and her diary pages relate stories of hardship and determination: a deceased mother, separation from younger siblings and determination to find a family. Jean Little has cleverly woven fact and fiction and has certainly helped to educate young minds to the trials and tribulations of the British home child.

1500

The story of the British home child does not end with an arrival in a new land. Due to their remarkable courage, strength and perseverance, Canada's British home children did endure, and most of them went on to lead healthy and productive lives and contribute immeasurably to the development of Ontario.

While the British home children were underprivileged and suffered from unfortunate circumstances, they endured, and almost all of them who came to Canada remained in Canada. They grew up to raise families of their own. They contributed to our country's economic growth and prosperity. They helped to cultivate our country's values and defend our country's freedom. More than 10,000 of them fought for Canada in the First and Second World Wars.

In a February 23 email to me this year, Carol Elder mentioned the service to country by her grandparents:

"Both of my maternal grandparents were home children who came at very young ages to Canada through Dr. Barnardo's home. My grandmother was a toddler when she arrived, and I know that she and my grandfather endured many hardships and things they never spoke about to me.

"They arrived in rural Ontario and worked on farms, taking care of children and doing housework starting at a very young age and lasting until it was time to serve in World War I.

"I was horrified when I read accounts of home children and realized some were servants and slaves, and I know Canadians aren't aware of this at all. It's a well-kept secret, partially because our grandparents were too ashamed to be home children and many did not have good experiences, so never talked about it. Canadians need to know this part of our history and how hard it was for these children to endure all that was expected of them as 'home boys' and 'home girls' and what they had to do just to survive."

Canada's British home children are part of our country's history. They are part of our heritage. They represent a part of our past, and their descendants—these people in the gallery today—represent a part of our future. Their stories are ones that need to be taught in our schools.

Today, it is estimated that 12% of Canada's population is made up of British home children and their descendants. They represent more than four million Canadians, and the number continues to grow. Yet there are many Canadians who still don't know the story of the home children. They are not aware of the hardships they suffered and the sacrifices that were made. They are not aware of the tremendous contributions that British home children made to the social and economic fibre of our great province.

In a letter to me just a few short weeks ago, Kathy Crowhurst, of Stevensville, Ontario, writes:

"My father was one of the children that were deposited on Canadian soil, many years ago. I have an aunt, but I have no idea where she is located or if she has a family.

"I fervently believe that Canada grew into the country it has become because of these children. Through desire or necessity, they came with hands willing to help, not hands out looking for assistance.

"My father was instrumental in forming the local fire department, the local school board and, with others, an early form of social assistance. If anyone was ill, injured or unable to work, local farmers, of which my father was one, would donate a sack of potatoes, root vegetables, along with packages of meat, until the person was back on their feet."

Kathy Crowhurst concludes her remarks to me with these words: "I agree with your recognition for a day to be established to honour the men and women who helped

create the Canada that so many enjoy today, and take for granted."

Many Ontarians are not familiar with the story of acceptance, the desire for home children to be accepted into families and lives of Ontarians. Since introducing a similar bill to Bill 12 in this Legislature on February 18 this year, I have received many letters and emails from Ontarians. Ron Baker of Cornwall, Ontario, in my riding writes:

"My father, Edwin Matthew Baker, was a British home child.

"As was common with home children, he never spoke of his past, and job one when they arrived in Canada was to eliminate their accents and all vestiges of England. This my father did.

"Always interested in my family's history, my search began in 1970 with a letter to the Boston registry office and the Gibbs Home. Boston indicated they had nothing, and the letter to Gibbs Home was returned. So my search stalled for many years.

"This fact, that my father was a home child, was only discovered by me in August 2008 when I, by chance, Googled "Gibbs Home" because I had an old, torn envelope addressed to my father at the Gibbs Home in 1940. To my surprise, I came upon a site to which I asked a very general question.

"I received an answer from Sarge and Pauline Bampton, home children representatives in Quebec. They informed me that they had records of my father's stay in the Gibbs Home in Sherbrooke, records of his arrival in Quebec and, in fact, had his original 'wooden footlocker' in their shed with his name stencilled on it.

"My father had rid himself of the box at the first farm he worked at in 1928. It remained there until 1998 when it was passed on to the Bamptons and then to me in 2008."

In letter after letter and email after email I received messages from descendants of home children that told of hardship and sacrifice. Some of them were very hard to read because of having to read about situations of abuse.

In conclusion, we, as provincial members of Parliament, have the opportunity to change the lack of knowledge about the contribution to Ontario by British home children. We can help tell their story. We can proclaim September 28 the day of the British home child in the province of Ontario. We can give Ontarians an opportunity to learn about their past and collectively recognize the contributions of Ontario's British home children and their descendants.

This year, Canada Post will issue a stamp commemorating home children. As well, the federal government has proclaimed this year, 2010, as the Year of the British Home Child. Here in the province of Ontario, I encourage my fellow parliamentarians to join me in officially recognizing September 28 as British Home Child Day.

As I speak to the folks in the gallery, it was my pleasure last September to accompany these folks over to the orphanage at Bridge of Weir, Quarrier's Village, as we learned, as we discovered, as we understood the sac-

rifices these people made, and also to understand the contributions that were made to Ontario by the descendants. I want to say thank you to the descendants we have here for the work that you have done and for the encouragement you've given me to have this day proclaimed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate.

Mr. Steve Clark: I am pleased to join my colleagues and rise in the House to speak in support of Bill 12, which proclaims September 28 each year as British Home Child Day.

I want as well to welcome the people in the gallery who have come today to listen and to watch the debate.

My riding of Leeds–Grenville is just next door to the member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry. Because of the nature of this place, we sometimes don't often agree on issues, but I am pleased today that I will be supporting his bill. There are probably some times on this side of the House when maybe he does support some of the issues that we champion and I know in my heart that some day he'll reciprocate his support for something I'm looking for.

Bill 12 has a great significance to me, not just personally and to my family, but also in the riding I represent, Leeds–Grenville. You see, my wife Deanna's paternal grandfather, Sidney Roberts, was a British home child. He came to Canada as a seven-year-old boy with his older brother John, who was nine. They were part of a group of children aged seven to 19 on the Dominion Steamship Line that departed from Liverpool on July 30, 1908, bound for Montreal. They were then shifted to Ontario and Deanna's grandfather lived in Woodstock. He lived with a farm family, but he was never adopted.

Sidney's mother died in childbirth and he was the youngest of 11 children. The family was separated and some of the children remained in England, some went to Canada, some to the United States and some to Australia.

My late father-in-law, Dave Roberts, who was a great fan of this place—he watched the legislative channel intently when it was provided; I know now some of the satellite companies don't provide it. I know he would have been very happy with my election on March 4 and if he was alive today he would be watching the legislative channel and be proud to have his father's name mentioned with such a wonderful bill, Bill 12.

As well, the member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, Mr. Brownell, mentioned the receiving house in Brockville, Ontario, in my riding, that his grandmother and his great-aunt were sent from as domestics. The home is located in my riding and I would like to take a few moments to speak about it. I'd also like to take this opportunity to thank the Brockville historian Doug Grant for providing me with some historical information on the Fairknowe Home for Scottish orphans that is now known as the Fairknowe Apartments, at 6 Fairknowe Drive in the city of Brockville.

I've known Mr. Grant for many years, and I commend him for his assistance and also for the work that he's

done in my riding to preserve and promote history in the area.

1510

I know that I can't use a prop, but I do have some historical documents that Mr. Grant has provided me. I'm sure that the people in the gallery have seen some of the pictures that have been in the history books of the Fairknowe Home, but I have in front of me a picture—it's an amazing photo, dated 1897—that was taken at the side of Fairknowe, the Quarrier home for orphans in Brockville. It was a large group of mostly girls that had just arrived by ship and railway from Scotland, and there's a small group of boys dressed in dark suits with white collars.

"The organization run by William Quarrier, the Orphan Homes of Scotland, purchased this large house in the east end of Brockville in 1888 from Amelie and Harry B. Abbott, the previous owners. Abbott had been the vice-president and managing director of the Brockville and Ottawa Railway while living here. Earlier, from about 1847 to 1871, it had been the home of Caroline and George Crawford, the original owners."

I'm told that the taking of a group photo like the one I have in my hand was a tradition when a new group of boys and girls arrived. The adults who are pictured do include William Quarrier and his wife, Isabella, although I understand from talking to some historians that some of the people in the document remain unidentified.

In later years, the Fairknowe Home was operated by Claude Winters, who was its superintendent, and operations of that facility closed in 1934, when the property was sold to Dorothy and Arthur Hardy. It's interesting to note that some of the early work of the children's aid in Brockville was, for a time, carried on at this home on Fairknowe. The property was ultimately subdivided for housing in 1934. The remains of this once elegant home can still be found on Fairknowe Drive, as I mentioned; it's an apartment building. There's really nothing recognizing what had happened at that facility. There wasn't much other than some of the books that have been published and some of the writings that I had the pleasure of getting from Mr. Grant.

I should mention that a section of the old Brockville cemetery contains a large monument with the names of a number of children who died here, in my riding in Brockville, while under the care of the Quarriers.

I also want to take a few moments to mention a meeting I had in my Brockville constituency office on April 16. Donna King from Brockville visited me about Bill 12 and introduced me to the details of the life of Walter Wilson, who passed away in 1979. I've known Donna King for a long time through her daughter Darlene. I have been friends and I worked in the Recorder and Times with Darlene's husband, Jeff Lawson. Donna's husband, Wayne, is the deputy chief for the Elizabethtown-Kitley fire department. My sons spent a lot of time with one of the Lawsons' sons. They have two boys, Dane and Drew, and I know they played hockey together.

It was just a wonderful meeting I had with Donna as she was lobbying me to support Bill 12 and talking about Walter Wilson. He was originally named Walter Collett. It was amazing, some of the possessions that Donna still had—significant possessions from Walter's life. She had his certificate of education from Dr. Barnardo's Homes in London, England, and she has the original Dr. Barnardo's trunk which was given to each student for the transportation of all their possessions. She also showed me a picture of a personal medallion which had "For Good Conduct and Length of Service" from Dr. Barnardo. Donna also had Walter's army records, including a notification of a change of name, which actually took place in the field of battle in Italy on December 26, 1943, where Walter changed his name from Walter Collett to Walter Wilson. Donna was very, very interested. She had a number of documents.

The member for Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry should know that she did quite a lot of research. She had a number of newspaper clippings. I believe there was one from the Toronto Star commending the member opposite for his work. She was very, very excited. I had with me, at that meeting, the letter from Mr. Brownell asking for my support for the bill, so I think she was very surprised that I knew about the bill. But I really appreciated meeting with her and learning a little bit more about Walter's life in Brockville. He was a former employee of the corporation of the city of Brockville.

I'm pleased to join with my fellow MPPs to tell the story of the British home child. I applaud the member opposite for his private member's bill proclaiming September 28 as British Home Child Day in the province of Ontario.

I want to echo his comments about Canada Post. I'm glad that Canada Post will be issuing a stamp commemorating home children, and it is very fitting that the federal government has proclaimed 2010 the Year of the British Home Child. It is important for us to give Ontarians an opportunity to learn from their past and for all of us to recognize the contributions and sacrifices of the British home child. I appreciate that some of their descendants are here today to join in this event.

It was a tough life for some of these orphans, and certainly their story needs to be told. Again, I want to applaud the member opposite for bringing this bill to the floor of the Legislative Assembly today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I want to rise in support of this motion. I want to let the proponent know that we, as New Democrats, will support this. We think this is, as they say in the business, a bit of a no-brainer.

The unfortunate reality is that our history has sometimes taught us how not to do things. We've seen a different day today, compared to the 1800s and early 1900s, in how we treat each other as people, and more importantly, how we treat kids. Unfortunately, far too many of the British home children that were sent to Canada in order to find homes for them, given the

circumstances back home, ended up in some homes that, quite frankly, were less than stellar as we would say, where children were abused in multitudes of ways that in the end didn't lead to anything productive when it came to their experience.

I think that for us, as the Ontario Legislature, to recognize that that is the fact and that is what happened, and that we want to do something in order to recognize that pain and that suffering, is a good thing but also a bit of a celebration, because not all of these children were treated badly, and we have to also put that on the record. A number of families did provide positive experiences for those kids who came into Canada, worked on the farms and did the work they did as British home children, and all—those who were unfortunately often abused and those who were not—ended up becoming very productive members of our society. I think we need to celebrate that.

I think it says something about the human spirit, and that is that in the worst, most adverse conditions, the power of the human soul and the power of the individual are sometimes beyond explanation. People can live with some of those experiences, grow strength from them and decide that this is not the type of life they want to live, and certainly not the life they want other people to live, and gain from that experience, from what they've lived, an opportunity to give back to society what they think it should be as an experience for somebody going through very similar circumstances.

So you look at the contributions of the British home children as a result of those experiences, both negative and positive. They've come back into our society and repaid this country—far more than we probably deserve considering what happened to them—in the fields of art, science, work, labour, business, and the list goes on. And yes, even provincial and federal politicians come from those experiences, and have contributed to what Ontario is today. I think it's also incumbent upon us to recognize the valuable contribution these kids gave to society, not just as children, but more importantly as they became adults and started to become full members of our society.

It is unfortunate, as was mentioned by the member who sponsored the bill, that far too often the kids would end up having to settle in some home somewhere, and somehow or other they had to forget their heritage. They had to forget who they were. They had to stop speaking with a British accent and become Canadian. I think that something we've learned, probably over the last at least 30 to 40 years, is that that's not necessarily the right thing to do. A country and a people are better when they know where they come from, are proud about who they are and are able to live in a country called Canada in a way that they're able to also find room to say, "I'm proud, I'm British, I was born in Britain, I'm English. I have heritages. I've got traditions. I have particular accents that are different than others," and we should celebrate that, because, at the end of the day, that's what I think makes Canada such a unique place in the world: that we have, over the last 40 years, very much changed

our policies when it comes to how we become more tolerant and very much so become much more a multicultural community.

1520

We know that immigration in Canada, by and large in the beginning, was mostly English and French, and eventually other European stock, but over the last 30 or 40 years we see people from all points of the earth. As we look at our country now, as we look at our province and we look at our cities and towns, we've become stronger. Was it hard at the beginning? Obviously. Nobody likes change. Everybody resists change. Everybody—I shouldn't say "everybody," but most people would rather things stayed the way they are. But as British home children have contributed to the fabric of Ontario and Canada, we are learning from that experience that if we allow others to live in our country and to express themselves as who they are, as a country, as a province and as cities and towns, we are a much, much stronger place.

Again, I want to say to the member who sponsored this bill: job well done. We will be supporting you. I just want to repeat, because I know my colleague the member from Nickel Belt wants to speak to this as well, that we recognize that the hardships and the sadness that unfortunately far too many kids experienced as a result of the treatment they had from their foster families, the people they came to live with, were beyond description in many cases and, quite frankly, as somebody said early in debate, a lot of people who have gone through it would rather not discuss themselves, as a result of the experience they had. We also need to recognize that there were a lot of kids who did come and have a very positive experience. We did have families out there who tried to do the right thing.

On behalf of New Democrats, we want to support this bill and we encourage its passage as a motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: I'm more than pleased to rise in support of the bill of my partner from Stormont-Dundas and South Glengarry.

The practice actually started in 1618, when 100 children were sent to Virginia. Often children were kidnapped from Scotland, and they were used for labour shortages in the British colonies. That practice continued until 1757, when it was exposed. The Children's Friends Society was founded in 1830 in London. The Society for the Suppression of Juvenile Vagrancy was identified, and the first group of children was sent to the Cape of Good Hope and Swan River in Australia, in the colonies, in 1832. In August 1835, 230 of those children were shipped to Toronto and to New Brunswick.

The main pioneer of child migration was actually the Scottish evangelical church. That's when the anger actually started with Annie Macpherson, her sister Louisa Birt, and the Londoner Maria Rye. They were appalled by child slavery and the abuse of those children in the matchbox industry. So, in 1870, they purchased a very

large workshop. They called it Home of Industry, where they fed and they educated the poor children. Some 500 children were trained and sent to Canada into these distribution homes that my colleague spoke of in Belleville, Galt and Knowlton.

It's absolutely amazing, when you consider the number of children. It is estimated that over 350,000 children were sent to the colonies in all of this time. What did happen, as well, was that in 1874 the London Board of Governors decided to send a representative, and his name was Andrew Doyle. The reason was because there were rumours of abuse of these children. In fact, and I'm going to quote from his report: "Because of Miss Rye's carelessness and Miss Macpherson's limited resources, thousands of British children, already in painful circumstances, were cast adrift, to be overworked or mistreated by the settlers of early Canada, who were generally honest but often hard taskmasters."

The British House of Commons set up a ruling. They put in place a committee, and they decided to investigate, but in fact they did nothing. Believe it or not, this practice continued until 1960. Until 1960, this practice actually continued. As I indicated, they identified, from that first 100 children in the colony in 1618, 150,000 children were dispatched over those 350 years—amazing.

Today they say often we should learn from history or we are doomed to repeat it. I think today of the British home children and what they must have gone through and I think of the child soldiers in Africa, who too are kidnapped from their families. The difference is that instead of a sickle or scythe in their hand, they are given a gun. But they too were taken, as they were in Europe. A lot of these parents believed their children would be in an orphanage. They didn't know they were being shipped across to the colonies; they had no idea. Not all of these children were homeless. They had parents, just parents who couldn't afford to care for them, so they put them where they thought they would be fed and educated, and yet they were actually abused and abandoned—amazing.

The other thing that's very amazing for me is that although there has been an apology by the Australian government, our Canadian immigration minister then, Jason Kenney, said, "There's no need for Canada to apologize for abuse and exploitation suffered by thousands of poor children shipped here from Britain starting in the 19th century.... The issue has not been on the radar screen here, unlike Australia where there has been a long-standing interest. The reality is that, here in Canada we are taking measures to recognize that sad period, but there is, I think, limited public interest in official government apologies for everything that's ever been unfortunate or (a) tragic event in our history."

Well, I disagree, and I'd like to think that my colleague's member's bill will actually make a difference to the families, to the descendants. There are, indeed, times when apologies are important, because as a Canadian, as a person who represents a constituency, my constituency needs to know that our history has not been spotlessly clean, that in fact there are circumstances where we need

to step back and say, "I'm sorry" and to ensure that this abuse does not continue in any other part of the world today as it did in the past so that we can, in fact, learn from our experiences.

I think this is an important part of what we're all about. It's a teachable moment that you have given us, the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, and I hope that all of us in the House will, in fact, think this through on how we can take it to our constituency and share this time with all the members of our constituency, so they too will know what, in fact, a British home child is and why we need to make a difference today so that in fact there will be a difference tomorrow.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry for bringing this motion forward. Like my colleague the NDP member from Timmins–James Bay said, we will be supporting the motion. I will start with an apology: Until this issue was brought forward in the Legislature, I knew really very little about it. It's through the effort of the member that I discovered a part of our past that I think none of us can be very proud of.

As the speaker went on and as we did a little bit of research, you realize the tough time that those children went through. First, it doesn't matter how poor your mom and dad are; they are your parents. They are your mom and dad, and you had to leave them behind. You were leaving them behind and going on a ship. I can just imagine how scared those children must have been, with a bunch of strangers, without having their parents around, going to a land that they knew nothing about, meeting with people who had weird accents, if they spoke their language at all. That must have been a very, very scary time for all of those kids. Then, as you start to dig into the issue and realize that this was not done one off—350,000 children were taken away from their parents or sent away, until we had a few good people who came to the rescue and tried to help those kids. The circumstances that we know about, and I think that motivated the member to put this motion forward, were that those kids were not treated well. They were, as has been said, treated like cheap labour and slave labour on farms. I'm sure that in the late 1700s and early 1800s—and even, I learn now, up to 1960—in centuries past, life was hard and everybody had to work hard. But those children didn't just pull their share; those children were used as slaves. There's something fundamentally wrong when you hear those words put together. How many ships came over, I have no idea, but it must be many, many to bring that many kids over.

1530

I want to support the Anglican Church and the people within that church who took those kids under their wing and tried to help them as best they could. But it also shows a failing. All of the governments that were there and all of the adults that were there failed those children.

The member from Etobicoke Centre—sorry, I know you by name, not by riding—certainly mentioned that those horrors, unfortunately, are still happening to this day. She points toward the child soldiers. There are many children around the world right now who are living this. In French we call them *les talibés*: they are kids who have been abandoned and then picked up by people who use them for their own benefit and not for that of the child.

I sit on an international panel for women, and we decided as a group to look at people trading. I didn't even know what that meant, but it was a subject that interested the other women on the panel that I sit on. Then I realized that there were over 2,000 women and children who came into Ontario illegally. Those stats were from two years ago, from 2008. Over 2,000 women and children were brought mainly to Ontario, illegally, to be used in the sex trade, the drug trade and to be maids and babysitters for people in Ontario. I guess, as the member said, we have a hard time learning from our mistakes. What happened there was a mistake. What those children endured is something that shouldn't have happened. We're thankful that their descendants are here with us today in this Legislature so that we can pay tribute to them. You have lived through—and your ancestors have lived through—horrendous beginnings, but I hope you will help us learn from our mistakes so that we never, never do that again, not in Ontario and not anywhere else. You are stories of survivors; a story that's worth telling and a story that's worth sharing, so that as we become aware of those shameful parts of our past, we learn and we dedicate ourselves: Never again.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I am also very pleased to be able to speak to this private member's bill introduced by my colleague from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry. As has already been mentioned, this bill, if passed, will proclaim September 28 of each year as British Home Child Day. I strongly support this bill for reasons that will readily become apparent. For you see, the story of these little immigrants, known as British home children, is also the story of me and my family. Next Tuesday, it will be 99 years to the day since my grandfather, Alfred Charles Hoskins, and his brother William left the Port of Liverpool, England, on the SS *Tunisian* steamship bound for Quebec City. My grandfather was 15 years old, his brother just 14. Their mother, we learned later, had died of measles when they were still toddlers and their father succumbed a few years later to tuberculosis.

Both were born in Islington, then a poor district of London. When their father became ill, they were sent to a nearby workhouse and, shortly thereafter, as was mentioned, transferred to Miss Macpherson's Home of Industry and put to work.

As had been the practice for decades, and would be for decades to come, Annie Macpherson's homes for orphans and paupers, along with the Thomas Barnardo homes and countless others, provided the child substrate for an immigration policy that subscribed to the view that

these unfortunate children would find moral and economic salvation in rural Canada. That is to say, it was the practice at the time that orphaned and, more often, simply the children of poor parents were rounded up and shipped—100,000 or more in all—to Canada. Tens of thousands were also sent to Australia, New Zealand and South Africa.

In the case of Canada, they were deployed as labourers in farming communities right across the country but primarily here in Ontario. So after arriving by boat to Quebec City, the two boys, Alfred and William, were brought to Ontario. My grandfather, Alfred, was placed on a farm in Norwich in southwestern Ontario where he was put to work milking by hand some 40 cows a day for a fellow named Nelles. He was treated well, became of age, married a girl from Brantford, joined the Salvation Army and had three boys, starting with my dad, who's watching today, William Hoskins, Bill. My dad was born in 1929 and the family moved to Simcoe. Alfred, my grandfather, went to work for Borden's Dairy and, some 30 years later, yours truly was born.

Now, despite already having lost both parents, grandpa and his brother William were separated when they were brought here to Ontario, despite coming across on the same ship. William, or Uncle Bill as we knew him, was sent to a farm just outside of Fergus. World War I followed soon after and Uncle Bill enlisted. I actually have his attestation papers where he enlisted.

I should give credit, actually, to the National Archives of Canada, as I feel like we have a bond here. The descendants who are here of home children give credit to the National Archives. There's a wealth of information about home children on many sites, but the National Archives have made a real effort to put all of this information online, so I was able to actually see the ship manifest for the ship that they came across on and the attestation papers I mentioned when my uncle enrolled in World War I.

After he enrolled, he was deployed to France and was among those gassed at Ypres, it seems during the battle of Passchendaele. Despite his injuries, he returned safely to Fergus. He married and was the foreman in the sheet metal division of a washing machine factory for 45 years.

Many of the children sent to Canada as British home children faced tremendous challenges, including horrible abuse, poverty, loneliness and malnutrition. My grandfather and great uncle, despite being separated, were among the lucky ones and were treated well by supportive families.

Home children faced and overcame enormous obstacles and challenges, contributing so much to this country's culture and its economy. I'm proud that my great uncle was one of more than 10,000 British home children who fought for Canada in the First World War.

Now, a few years ago, my father, Bill, and I travelled with my mother, Jean, back to England, where we combed through the archives of the Macpherson home where my grandfather and his brother had stayed as

orphans. We visited the street where the two boys were born, and no doubt we have countless relatives in England whom we will never know.

Today, it is estimated, as has been mentioned, that more than 10% of Canada's population is made up of British home children and their descendants. And I am one of those many descendants, and I'm proud to stand in this Legislature today in support of this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. Further debate?

Seeing none, Mr. Brownell, you have up to two minutes for your response.

Mr. Jim Brownell: I would, first of all, like to thank the member from Leeds–Grenville, the members from Timmins–James Bay, Etobicoke Centre and Nickel Belt, and certainly the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, for their support and encouragement of this bill.

1540

When I presented this bill on February 18, I was sitting way down there. I remember the Minister of Health Promotion coming over and having a wonderful chat with me about the bill that I was presenting. I didn't think that it would receive the coverage that it did, especially from James Coyle in his article in the Toronto Star, but we heard stories this afternoon, and especially the stories from the member from Leeds–Grenville, who discovered—and I met the member on April 16 in Kemptville, Ontario. We were at the same function. He commented and told me how excited he was that he was going to visit the individual in his riding who had all these artefacts and stories and whatnot. I could just see the excitement in his eyes. I'm delighted this afternoon that he was able to impart that here in the Legislature.

When I presented here on February 18, I had no idea that anyone sitting in the chamber, any member, was connected to this story of the British home child. I felt that with the numbers we had in Canada, the number of children who came over and the number of descendants there could be, there possibly were others. I was absolutely thrilled when Dr. Hoskins, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, approached me and said that he had a story to tell. He has a story of a grandfather who, 99 years ago next Tuesday, left Great Britain.

When I stand here today, having had these little Bibles presented to me, and when I open these—I can't lift them up and show you, but when I opened those Bibles and saw that Christina Myles left with her Bible on June 6, 1914, and James Myles, her brother, on March 6, 1915, that's the history; that's the story of courage, determination and perseverance that we all want to talk about with this bill.

I encourage all members to support it. Let's have September 28 of each year as British Home Child Day in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time for this ballot item has expired. We'll vote on Mr. Brownell's item in about 50 minutes' time.

MINING AMENDMENT ACT
(RESOURCES PROCESSED
IN ONTARIO), 2010
LOI DE 2010 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LES MINES
(RESSOURCES TRANSFORMÉES
EN ONTARIO)

Mr. Bisson moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 36, An Act to amend the Mining Act to require resources to be processed in Ontario / Projet de loi 36, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les mines afin d'exiger que les ressources soient transformées en Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Pursuant to standing order 98, the honourable member has up to 12 minutes for his presentation. Mr. Bisson.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I first of all want to take the time to thank all those people who weathered the ride all the way from northern Ontario to be with us here today. We have a number of people who were on the bus last night in order to be here for this debate. On behalf of all Ontarians and the people from where we come from, I want to thank them for taking the time to do so. I think it was extremely important, and we should give them a hand for having done that journey down here.

I would also want to indicate that the mayor of the city of Timmins is here, Mayor Tom Laughren, who has been a strong supporter and advocate working with the coalition, as we call it in the city of Timmins. He is with us in the members' gallery. Along with him is the president of our coalition, Dennis Couvrette. Earlier, we had Charlie Angus, the federal member of Parliament, who has also been a big part of what we have been doing.

We all know the story: Xstrata decided that they were going to close down. Why? Because they can; it's as simple as that. There are three copper smelter refineries in Canada: the one in Manitoba, which is shutting down this summer; the Xstrata refinery and smelter in Timmins, which does copper and zinc; and then the one in Quebec. What's happened is that Falconbridge owns two, and they decided to make more money with one. So they announced last December that they would be shutting down the smelter and refinery for both copper and zinc in the city of Timmins.

I want to put this in perspective. This is like the city of Toronto losing 35,000 to 40,000 jobs when you compare it by ratio to what it means to not only Timmins but communities like Smooth Rock Falls, Iroquois Falls, Matheson and others, whose residents commute in to this facility every day to go to work. It is a facility that adds value to copper and zinc, which is very important when it comes to what we always try to do, and that is to promote value-added products in the province of Ontario.

We have asked our Premier, Dalton McGuinty, to be our champion, the champion of the coalition. We asked him, "Sit down with Xstrata, sit down with us in the coalition, and let's look at the issues and why you want to leave. You be that champion. You help us along in

order to identify what the problem is so that we can fix it and keep those jobs here."

Yes, the Premier did meet with us, and for that, the coalition and myself want to thank him. He actually had two meetings with us—one with the coalition and the second one with Xstrata—but he stopped short of what we wanted, and that was to be that advocate, to be that champion.

I just remind people: The auto sector has gone through something quite similar. It was not a long stretch of the imagination to understand why the government of Ontario moved to try to deal with some of the issues in the auto sector. We're asking for no different in northern Ontario. The copper smelting, zinc and nickel refineries of this province are going to need help, and if you can't fix the problems at Xstrata, which I believe can be fixed, what does that mean for the rest of what goes on?

Let me talk now about the bill and simply what the bill does. Currently, section 91 of the Mining Act says that if you're a mining company and you're extracting ore in the province of Ontario, if the ore is to be processed outside of Canada, it must only be by ministerial permission. Simply put, if you have ore that you want to process outside of Ontario—for example, De Beers, which sends 90% of Ontario diamonds into Europe, has to have the permission of the government, the minister of mines, to do so. All I am proposing in this bill is to change the word "Canada" and put the word "Ontario," so that any ore that is to be shipped outside of the province of Ontario would have to have the same ministerial permission.

I listened to the government in question period today and earlier and to some of the comments they've made, both in the media and in discussions I've had with them. They say, "If we pass Bill 91, we're putting up trade protection. We're going to be making it impossible for ores that come from other places in the world to come to Ontario." Give me a break. The act already has the same provisions now that it would have if you pass the bill that I'm putting forward. The ore that goes into our steel mills in Hamilton and Sault Ste. Marie by and large comes from outside of Canada. Section 91 of the Mining Act is the same provision that I am proposing: Ore is allowed to come in.

As well, we have ore in Ontario that is already shipped out of Ontario. We know, for example, that the Victor diamond mine, which started up a couple of years ago, is shipping 90% of their diamonds to be processed in Europe. I would like it to be better than that and higher than that, but they have to get ministerial permission to send those diamonds out. So for the government to argue that this bill will prevent the shipping and transference of ores between Ontario and other jurisdictions—they don't understand the makeup of the mining industry and certainly don't understand what's in section 91 of the act now.

All I'm asking for is a simple change: We replace the word "Canada" with the word "Ontario." We use exactly the same language as is currently in section 91, but we replace those two words only.

That is the important thing. Why we want to do this is very simply this: Why would we not, as Ontarians, want to add value to those ores that are extracted from Ontario or the trees that come out of our forests? Why would we not, as Ontarians, say, "These are natural resources that belong to all of Ontario, and we should benefit from those natural resources in a positive way"? Why should we allow the Xstratas of this world to say, "We're going to come in and we're going to mine the ore out of the ground or pull the trees out of the forest and we're going to ship them outside of Ontario to be processed somewhere else"? Does that ore belong to those companies? Do those trees belong to those companies? No. They are the property of the people of Ontario, and we should take the time to make sure that we are able to process them in Ontario in order to add value to those products so that Ontario can benefit from the natural resources we have.

We are lucky in this province. We are blessed with much in the way of natural resources. Why should we not, in this province, want to make sure that we benefit from those natural resources that come from Ontario?

Are we proposing something that is different or new? I heard the Premier today say, "There's not a jurisdiction in Canada that does that." Have you talked to Danny Williams lately? When the Voisey's Bay mine was being started up, the company said, "We will mine the ore and we will put it into concentrate, and we're shipping it out of Labrador to be smelted and refined outside the borders of Labrador and Newfoundland." What did Danny Williams say? "Absolutely not." He says, "Those are the natural resources of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, and the value-added jobs will happen here in this province or you will not mine the ore."

1550

Where's our Danny Williams here in Ontario? Where's the Premier who is prepared to stand up and say what Danny Williams has done, what Alberta does, what British Columbia does, what countries in South American and Europe do, and Australia and others? That is that we control our natural resources in the sense of being able to make sure that they benefit the people of those jurisdictions.

Just recently in the paper, about two weeks ago, there was a story out of the Alberta tar sands that China wanted to buy up some of the tar sands. They wanted to buy it to get the feed oil to process in their own refineries. What did the government of Alberta say and do? They said, "Absolutely not." The oil that comes out of the tar sands of Newfoundland will be processed in—excuse me; Alberta—will be processed in Alberta.

Boy, I have to have that glass of water, don't I?

So if it's good enough for Danny Williams, it's good enough for Alberta, it's good enough for the province of Quebec, it's good enough for Nova Scotia, why is it not good enough for us?

I say to the government across the way that we should at least have this debate. You should allow this bill to pass at second reading so that we can refer this matter to a committee, have a full discussion when it comes to the benefits of this act and move forward to do what is right.

I say again, my friends, these natural resources in the province of Ontario are there for the benefit of all. They're not there just for the benefit of the companies that extract those natural resources.

We need to ensure, as Ontarians, that those natural resources, as they come out of the ground or out of our forests, are added value here in Ontario so that the economic might that once was Ontario continues.

You need to also understand here in the Legislature that a large part of our GDP comes from northern Ontario, and from where? Our natural resources. Mining and forestry are important parts of what is the economy of Ontario. Toronto is a financial capital. One of the reasons is because it is where you raise money when it comes to the mining industry in the world. The biggest centre for raising money for mining in the world is here in Toronto.

We all benefit when it comes to those natural—thank you. My health critic here is helping me out. My God. We all benefit from the activities of mining and forestry, and we should be doing all that we can in order to facilitate that value-added products are made from those natural resources that come.

To close, in the last two minutes I have: We still have an opportunity with Xstrata to do what is right. The refinery and smelter is not going to be ripped down any time soon. Yes, they're announcing that tomorrow is the beginning of the closure of that refinery and smelter in Timmins, but it's not too late. If we can get the Premier to do what we've asked him to do, and that is to get Xstrata at the table so that we can deal with the issues that they say are the reasons for them leaving, I'm confident that we can turn this around. If you can't turn around Xstrata, and Xstrata succeeds in closing and ripping down the smelter and refinery, there will never be another refinery built in Ontario; there will never be another smelter built in Ontario. This has been said by our mayor, Tom Laughren, and it has been supported and agreed with by Xstrata.

It was shocking the other day, when we were at the meeting with the Premier, the last meeting that we had. Xstrata basically admitted that the Ring of Fire that the government touts so much and wants to put forward as the saviour of the economy of northern Ontario—that none of the value-added process, when it comes to refining and smelting, is going to be done out of those ore bodies that are part of the Ring of Fire.

So I say to the government across the way, this is not just about Xstrata and the workers at Xstrata. This is about all of Ontario and about how we're able to benefit if we ensure we have proper policies that say the ore and the resources that come from the province of Ontario, we need to add value to them, and if there are good reasons why they have to go, you need ministerial permission to be able to do so.

This is not radical legislation. It is exactly the legislation that we currently have on the books in the Mining Act, under section 91. All I'm asking is that we change the word "Canada" to "Ontario."

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to rise to speak to Bill 36, which would require minerals that are mined in Ontario to be processed in Ontario.

First of all, I would like to acknowledge that it's really heartbreaking in any town to see a business close, to see people laid off, to see people losing their jobs. Although the perception of Guelph is that it's a university town, in fact the biggest employment sector in Guelph traditionally has been as a manufacturing town, in particular, most heavily, auto parts and also assembling in the area, which means that my town has been very hard hit by the downturn. We've also seen plants closing: one, WC Wood, which is a family-owned firm that manufactures freezers and refrigerators. If you own a chest freezer, it was probably built in Guelph. That company went bankrupt. All the people who worked there, some for multiple generations, lost their jobs.

So I do have some sense of what has been happening in Timmins and the pain that families there are feeling and of the fact that the member for Timmins is truly trying to help his constituents, as he ought to be. But for the rest of the members in this House, we do have a responsibility to look at the larger picture. I do actually agree with the member from Timmins that it isn't just about Xstrata in Timmins; we need to look at the implications for more people around the province than just this one particular situation.

As the member described, what the law currently says in essence is that minerals that are mined in Ontario must be processed somewhere in Canada unless there's ministerial permission to go elsewhere. The member, I also agree, is quite accurate when he talks about the importance of mining to the Ontario economy. From the data that I've got, it looks as though there are 22,000 jobs in mining and 50,000 in fabrication and processing of the minerals and ores that are mined. When you then look at the mining equipment and service sectors for all that mining and processing, that's probably something in the order of another 25,000 people. If you look at the employment of aboriginals, which I know is an issue that is near and dear to the member from Timmins because he also represents James Bay, the mineral sector, in fact, is the largest private sector employer of aboriginals in Canada.

We stand out in Ontario as being a huge portion of the mining that goes on in Canada. Nickel, gold, cobalt, copper, salt—in Goderich—cadmium, selenium, barite—the list goes on. Ontario's economy is significantly impacted by what happens in the mining sector. In fact, one estimate I've seen, looking at 2008—and data is always a year or so out of date—is as much as \$9.6 billion, almost \$10 billion of the economy, and that's obviously going to have varied with the recession. A huge impact—that's acknowledged. But that impact isn't just in Timmins, so we need to look at the big picture.

The big picture says that Ontario's mining sector is interrelated with the rest of Canada. If you look at who we process, what our processing and smelting business is, in Ontario we're already processing minerals and ores that are shipped from Quebec, from British Columbia,

from Manitoba, from Newfoundland and Labrador, as well as from out of country: from the United States, from Peru, from Chile and from Australia. The question is, if we were to say, "Minerals can't go out," what would be the impact if we kick off a trade war and the other provinces and other countries retaliate and minerals can't come in?

1600

If we look at the impact here, if we look at the smelting of nickel, almost 100% of the nickel that is mined stays here to be smelted; 85% is actually refined here. But if we look at what is actually going on at Xstrata's smelter in Falconbridge, near Sudbury, represented in part by the member from Nickel Belt, which employs 317 people, 40% of the nickel being smelted at Falconbridge comes from Quebec and 10% of it comes from Newfoundland and Labrador.

If we look at the iron ore that is being smelted particularly at Dofasco in Hamilton or in the riding of my colleague from Sault Ste. Marie, three quarters of it comes from outside Ontario. Three quarters of it comes from Newfoundland and Labrador, from Quebec and also from outside the country, from Minnesota and Michigan. That's 3,500 jobs in the Soo and 6,400 at Dofasco, where the members from Stoney Creek, Hamilton and Welland are obviously impacted, in terms of those jobs.

When we look at the impact, we have to look at the impact on the economy of Ontario, which is ore coming in and being processed in Ontario. Yes, some is going out, and that is truly unfortunate. But this is not the time to be setting off a trade war.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thank you very much for the opportunity to say a few words on the bill that my colleague the member from Timmins—James Bay has before the Legislature today in private members' business.

I want, first of all, to pay my regards to the members of the coalition who are here today, workers who are here today and the mayor of Timmins, Mr. Laughren, who is here today. It is their hard work, in co-operation with Gilles Bisson, the member from Timmins—James Bay, that has gotten us to the point where New Democrats are actually putting solutions on the table once again, where New Democrats are telling the government it's time to wake up and smell the coffee in terms what needs to happen to make a real difference in terms of keeping good jobs in the province of Ontario.

What does that look like in this particular case? It looks like this private member's bill, which is a bill that simply makes an amendment to the existing Mining Act, changing the word "Canada" to the word "Ontario." But the effect is not simple. The effect is that the good jobs, like the 670 jobs at Xstrata, would be kept in Ontario, where the ore that is pulled out of the ground in Ontario will be processed at that smelter in Timmins.

I have to say I was there on a very cold day last week, Wednesday morning. It was nice and warm here in

Toronto, but I've got to tell you that standing on the side of the highway outside that plant with many of the people who have come today to hear this bill be debated was darned cold. But what was colder was the hearts of the people there, because they know that their government has turned its back on them and doesn't seem to care that these 670 jobs are going to be lost. Why do I say that? Because they—the coalition—actually sat down with the Premier of this province and had a discussion about what could possibly happen to save these jobs; the company was there too.

What did I hear just today as well as last week? I heard utter disappointment and anger. Why? Because in that meeting the Premier decided to sit on his hands and not provide a single—not a single—ray of hope, not a single thought of something proactive that could be done to save these jobs. That is dismal in terms of performance of the Premier of this province: happy to turn his back on these workers, on the opportunity that is still there but will not be realized any longer unless they're prepared to do something, and they can do something today. They can do something today. They can pass this bill, put it into committee and make sure that there is opportunity not only for the current workers at Xstrata but workers in the future. We need to make sure that the resources that we're pulling out of the ground in this province are creating good, decent, value-added jobs for the people of this province. It's a pretty simple concept.

We had people on the front of the lawn today talking about a totally different issue, the issue of scabs, which is an issue that's huge in another northern Ontario community, Sudbury. But part of what was happening out front was also the discussion about this very bill that we're talking about now. People out there were rallying. They were rallying, asking for their government to start doing something to help the workers in this province. Anti-scab legislation was part of it, but the other part of it was getting some acknowledgment that the government does have a role to play in keeping good, value-added jobs here in Ontario.

I am proud of Gilles Bisson, the member for Timmins-James Bay, and I am proud of my New Democratic Party colleagues here in the Legislature who are putting ideas forward. They're challenging this government to actually do something to help the workers in northern Ontario. Go and visit northern Ontario. Any one of you, go and visit northern Ontario and see the communities that have literally shut down, that have halved their populations. Why? Because there are no jobs for them anymore. Why? Because the government refuses to take a strong stand. The government refuses to have a backbone and do the thing that's right for the people of this province.

I have one last thing to say on this issue, and that is on the prospect that we have potential in this province, perhaps, around a new mining opportunity that the government mentioned in its budget with great fanfare; it's called the Ring of Fire. We've all heard the Ring of Fire ad nauseam around here, but what we're not hearing are

some of the warning bells that are currently going off when, in meetings like the one with Xstrata, companies like Xstrata say that there's not going to be any processing and refining of whatever is pulled out of the ground, that chromite, from the Ring of Fire. Why? Because the government doesn't have the backbone to make sure that those minerals are processed here in Ontario. Xstrata is saying, "You're not going to have any more of it." Smelting, processing—forget it; it's not going to happen in the province of Ontario, not unless this government is prepared to make sure that it is.

Let's not pretend that 10 years down the road we're actually going to have more jobs in northern Ontario. Let's not pretend that somehow the aboriginal communities, the First Nations communities around the Ring of Fire are actually going to get some benefit from those mines—maybe enough to pull the stuff out of the ground, but certainly not the good jobs that are supposed to go with the minerals that are coming out of there.

I have to say that not only is this government doing a bad turn for the people of Timmins and the surrounding area who work right now at Xstrata, but they're doing a bad turn for the future of mineral extraction and mining in the province of Ontario if they're not prepared to grow that backbone, stand up and take the proper stand, which is that it's not just about pulling stuff out of the ground and it's not just about cutting down forests. It's about making sure that those resources create long-term, good jobs for communities in northern Ontario and across this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'm honoured to enter the debate on Bill 36, An Act to amend the Mining Act to require resources to be processed in Ontario, which was introduced by the member from Timmins-James Bay.

I listened to him carefully, and I also listened to my colleague the member from Guelph outlining the position of the government of Ontario. Also, I listened to the third party leader speaking about many different issues, about the company not being supported by the government. I want to say for the record, for the people of Ontario, for everyone who's listening to us today, that the Premier and the Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry met with the company on several occasions and tried to give them whatever support they needed, but they refused it because they decided that they're not going to change their minds.

I've watched the third party many different times voting against the government's record. I remember when we offered GM and the auto industry some kind of support, the third party stood up and voted against our mission. They said that it was a waste of money, and many different issues came along with that. But right now, we are lucky and we are privileged to see the GM company paying back the loan, which was \$500 million, and making a profit for the province of Ontario.

1610

To the people of Ontario and all the people listening to us today, I think our Minister of Economic Development

and Trade, the Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry and the Premier won't spare any effort in taking advantage of any chance to save any company, any factory across the province of Ontario, to be protected, to be prosperous, to maintain the jobs they have in the province of Ontario if we see an opportunity, if we see any chance to protect them.

So again I want to say to the member from Timmins-James Bay, whom I respect a lot, that I listen to him carefully most of the time when he speaks. But it is not going to save a company when you create a border around northern Ontario or Ontario, because we in this province believe strongly in dealing with the rest of the provinces.

We talk about an Open Ontario. When we talk about Open Ontario, we don't mean to close the doors and tell the other provinces, "We cannot send you this mineral, we cannot send you steel, iron ore, copper or nickel, because we need it here in the province of Ontario." We cannot live alone. We live in a province, a part of a nation. We have to keep interactive with the rest of the nation, with the rest of the provinces, especially when we have a lot of companies in this province that depend a lot on different resources that come from Quebec, Manitoba, Alberta and different parts of country. They come here and give us the minerals and steel we need to continue producing in the province of Ontario.

Therefore, I think the most important thing is to create a strategy to enhance our ability to maintain jobs in the province of Ontario, not by closing the border and putting a big, huge fence around the province of Ontario and saying, "Yes, we produce it here. It has to be processed here; it has to be sold and bought in the province of Ontario."

We cannot live alone. In life, we give and take. That's why I don't believe for a minute that this bill is going to protect jobs. As I mentioned, the Premier and the minister met on different occasions with the company and with many different companies from the north, the south and the east, and we do our best to preserve jobs in the province of Ontario despite the cost.

I remember that the Minister of Economic Development and Trade sat down with the jam company from the Niagara Peninsula and offered them all the support they needed to keep the company open, but they refused because they had a different strategy.

The same thing in my riding of London-Fanshawe and also in the riding of the Speaker, where they have a Ford plant: We're working with this company on a daily basis to keep them in Ontario, but if head office decides to leave, what can you do? We can do nothing about it. We do our best. We give them cheap electricity. We give them tax support. We give them a free loan for many years to stay in the province of Ontario on one condition: keep jobs in this province. We did that in the past; we'll continue to do that in the future.

But I will have a difficult time supporting this bill to close Ontario. We cannot close Ontario. We cannot live alone. We are a part of a nation. We have to work

together. We have to sell, we have to buy, we have to interact with the rest of provinces, and I think that's why we will survive. That's why we keep prospering in the province of Ontario. All the records indicate that our direction, our strategy is working. I'm more than happy to support any jobs for the north any time of the day. We believe we cannot survive as southern people. We have to work together collectively as people from the north, the south, the east and the middle, because this is what makes Ontario stronger and vibrant.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased today to rise to speak to Bill 36, introduced by the member from Timmins-James Bay, and want to thank him for bringing it forward. Obviously, from the debate we've heard thus far, it's with the best of intentions.

The member says it is not strictly to save the 670 northern jobs at Xstrata, but that, in my mind, would be a good enough reason to bring this bill forward. That's what we're all elected to do: try to protect the best interests of the citizens we represent in our ridings.

However, I just want to point out that I think it's important not only to look at this bill, although it's not a major change, as has been said by some other speakers—I have the bill before me, and sometimes the comment is made that the bill was not read before we debate it, and I think that can happen to all of us. But today, you can read the bill rather quickly. The only operative section is number 1: "Subsection 91(1) of the Mining Act is amended by striking out the word 'Canada' and substituting 'Ontario'."

That's the change this bill is making, and obviously that's not a major change. It just means that presently they have to get permission to export raw product out of the country. Changing to the word 'Ontario', I understand, would just change it that now they would also have to apply if they're going to ship it outside Ontario—not to say that they couldn't do that, but they would have to justify why that needed to be done. I think that's a wonderful thing to put forward to help deal with keeping the smelter open.

However, we should not lose sight of the bigger issue that is clearly at stake here. We have to talk about the Ontario mining industry as a whole. Unfortunately, we have a government that does not understand that in order for the industry to flourish, certain conditions need to occur. This means not driving production cost prices up so high that local processing becomes difficult. Apparently, over the past seven years, jobs have not been the priority of the McGuinty government. For the almost seven years that they've been in office, this government has done more to scare investments away than to attract them. Mr. McGuinty's favourite tool is tax increases.

In the 2003 election campaign, Dalton McGuinty campaigned on the promise not to raise taxes, but in his first budget he introduced the single largest tax increase in Ontario's history. Similarly, Dalton McGuinty boasted about Ontario's low mining taxes. Ironically, the minute

the international company De Beers invested in building a diamond mine in northern Ontario, he slapped the industry with a surprise 13% diamond tax. Three years ago, in 2007, I filed a resolution that called on the Liberal government to repeal that industry-killing McGuinty tax grab. By increasing this tax without warning, Dalton McGuinty sent a message to the international mining business community. It said: "We don't want your investment in Ontario. If you invest in Ontario, be prepared; your tax rate could double overnight with no warning." It said to businesses looking to invest here that they can't trust the Ontario government. This is the type of investment and development climate that this government is creating. No single piece of legislation—as good as this one is—can fix these problems in Ontario's mining industry with such a hostile climate.

The honourable member from Timmins might remember that he spoke to my resolution, and he agreed that this government sent a clear message out to the investment community that Ontario is not a good place for them to invest, because the government is self-destructive when it comes to the mining industry. I applaud him for trying to keep the processing jobs in Ontario. I agree with the goal, but I think we need to accomplish it by creating favourable conditions, not just through legislation. This Premier has already done his best to kill the mining industry with red tape and harmful legislation. Those mines that he cannot dismantle, he has saddled with huge taxes and high energy prices.

In contrast, our leader, Tim Hudak, and the PC caucus have put forward a plan to help create jobs in Ontario. We believe that the way to encourage businesses to invest and expand in Ontario is to create a climate in which they can grow and prosper, to create a climate that allows them to be competitive, not just with other provinces but with businesses around the world. We have proposed reinstating the Red Tape Commission to reduce the number of redundant regulations that Ontario businesses have to deal with. We've also called on the government to create a one-year payroll holiday to encourage businesses to create new jobs and make it more affordable to hire new staff.

In contrast, the McGuinty government keeps creating more policies that force jobs out of Ontario. How can we blame Xstrata for pulling out of Timmins in order to save on skyrocketing refining costs in Ontario? The blame lies with a government that has been forcing up the cost of doing business in Ontario, such as the cost of hydro. This government is taking pride in its Green Energy Act, which makes the smelter unprofitable and will lead to 4,000 spinoff job losses throughout the province, in addition to the 670 direct positions in Timmins. Under the McGuinty government's Green Energy Act, producers of renewable energy are being paid rates as high as 80 cents per kilowatt, compared to the recent market price of 3.3 cents per kilowatt or the 4.5 cents the government-owned Ontario Power Generation gets for most of its electricity.

I support renewal energy, as does all the Conservative caucus, but its production should have some connection

to economic reality. Worse, he is tying the hands of successive governments by guaranteeing this shameful price for 20-year contracts. Only someone who is completely out of touch would expect business to invest in such a hostile climate. We know that this is an issue for many of our businesses, and I've heard from small businesses, farmers, greenhouses and people in the community who are all worried about our increasing energy cost.

Unfortunately, mining is only one example of an industry that is being affected, but it is one where the results of this government's policies are already being seen. It's clear that Dalton McGuinty doesn't know what he is doing with the mining industry, or may it be that McGuinty is still deciding after almost seven years in office whether he's even interested in developing the industry?

1620

In a news conference on February 11, Mr. McGuinty said, "In a highly competitive, knowledge-based global economy, we are not going to succeed in Ontario by pulling stuff out of the ground." But in his throne speech on March 8, McGuinty had changed his mind. His new message was that mining will save the northern economy. From the throne speech, we learned, "In 2008, northern Ontario became home to our first diamond mine. Your government will build on that success—particularly in the region known as the Ring of Fire." However, in the throne speech he forgot to mention that if a mining company chooses to invest in Ontario and create jobs, the McGuinty government has a habit of bringing in surprise taxes.

It's no wonder that investment is fleeing the province in droves. They don't know what Dalton McGuinty is doing. In fact, it seems Dalton McGuinty himself doesn't know what he's doing. He's raised energy prices significantly with the Green Energy Act, making the Xstrata smelter unprofitable. He has tabled Bill 191, which will cut off half the north from any mining or development. The Ring of Fire itself lies in this area, meaning it's not even clear if the mining would be legal. He has amended the Mining Act, but hasn't created any regulations for it. He allowed De Beers to build a diamond mine in northern Ontario, then slapped them with a surprise diamond tax.

Just 10 years ago, when Tim Hudak was the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, Ontario was the number one jurisdiction for mining in the world. Now it's number seven. Until we have a government that respects the valuable contributions that mining makes to this province and its economy, we will see more employers leaving the province.

Ontario can lead again, but only if the person in charge is a real leader—and presently, I don't think the leader is.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate.

Mr. Paul Miller: This is déjà vu for me. Three years ago, I was sent to Ottawa to lobby for the steelworkers

about the hostile takeover of Falconbridge by Xstrata. We fought against the takeover because of the questionable company record of Xstrata in Australia. They bought out their competition in Australia, promised the world, got in there for two or three years, shut down that community, shut down that plant within three years and moved on.

Let's face it: This is all about profit. It's about cheap labour. It's about eliminating your competition. This is what this is all about, and it's happening in steel, it's happening in forestry, it's happening in mining. US Steel did the same thing in Hamilton. They locked the guys out for 13 months because they wanted to play with their pensions.

This is another example of what's going on in our industry, the erosion of our base industries. We do not have Canadian content. Falconbridge and Inco were fine, established Canadian companies for many, many decades, and they got taken over. Our whole country is being taken over because the federal government and the provincial governments are not standing up to these multinationals. The multinationals are coming in, they're trying to force people about their pensions, force people to lower their wages and their benefits, and if they don't, they pull up stakes and leave, or threaten to leave.

That's what's really going on in this country, and it's been going on for the last 10 years. I've witnessed it from city, from town, right across this country. It's happening here again. Xstrata is bullying, the same as Vale Inco—the same thing, bullying.

I'm telling you right now that this is just an example of the lack of our government standing up for Canadian citizens, for good middle-class paying jobs. They want people to work for nine bucks an hour and they want to eliminate their benefits and attack their pensions.

Let's take the forestry industry as well. Let's take Kenora: two mills shut down in Kenora by Abitibi-Bowater because of the hydro rates. Xstrata is the same thing. Why in Ontario are we paying three times as much for hydro as Quebec or Manitoba? I don't understand that. We've got Niagara Falls, for crying out loud. They pay less for electricity in some of the northern states and we have more capacity to produce electricity. I don't understand that.

It's all about the bottom dollar. It's about squeezing good Canadian jobs and it's about squeezing our north. Our resources are our resources. Our resources—as the member from Timmins—James Bay has stated, we produce here and we also manufacture here. Instead of bringing in ores from all over the place—which we do have in northern Ontario; we have untapped resources there. We've got trees going down the road past Kenora—where these guys used to produce this in the mills—driving by in trucks going to Manitoba or driving to Quebec. What's going on? I can tell you right now: It's the demise of our base industries in Ontario, and if we don't start standing up and having more Canadian content, and more protectionism for Canadian jobs and Canadian mining, forestry and steel, this is going to be an

endless trip for us. It's going to keep going down and down until we do something. I firmly believe that this is a step in the right direction. Protect our resources, protect our good-paying jobs and stop being bullied by multinationals. That's what is going on.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: I first want to start by saying of the member from Timmins—James Bay that there's no more vocal champion and committed and genuinely sincere person. In fact, in his remarks—I listened earlier on—he reminds me of Danny Williams himself, with his passion and his commitment to his constituency. I mean that in a complimentary way, because he's really taking a page out of Danny Williams, who stood up and fought the idea of processing in the province versus exporting the issue, and he did mention that.

In this bill, as my counterpart from Oxford has said, there's not a lot, but it is a study of accuracy because all it does is strike out the word "Canada" and substitute the word "Ontario." What it does is, it forces a process of review, and I think that's appropriate. In fact, in that context I can certainly support it. At the same time, I fully believe in competition and "may the best organization win." I guess that you could say elections are like that in some respects. To me, that's important.

Here's the idea. The perception here is the reality, and the reality is that the De Beers mine example that has been explained is a footprint for this government. All of their solutions are based on taxing: getting more of your money and trying to settle the dispute in some other area with the money that you pay. Their mistreatment of northern Ontario started early on. They've pretty well decimated northern Ontario. A lot of it would be based on the electricity policy as well and the rates here. But even to the point of admitting it in their budget speech—they admitted that they're going to have to cut the price in the north by 25%, which leads me to believe that the pulp and paper and resource industry, not just Xstrata, have been suffering under an unduly high and less competitive price for electricity, whereas, if you look at Quebec and other jurisdictions, Quebec and Manitoba, our bordering provinces have a much more competitive industrial rate. Ontario's rate is going to be higher; there's no question about that.

I think you really just have to look at the health tax, the HST, the failed electricity program—and I see the municipal leaders here today. They all know that the OMPF, the upload-download, is actually not giving you a cent. They're taking the OMPF money out. The member from Timmins—James Bay has mentioned that many, many times. Those communities are going to be hollowed out. This government says one thing and does completely the opposite. I'm very disappointed.

My colleague from Oxford mentioned Bill 191 and the Planning Act, and the restrictions and the encumbrances on northern empowerment are quite sad. If you look at the economy in the north, if you look at the budget, they've admitted they've screwed up. There's a special

plan in here. It's called the Open Ontario northern strategy. There really is a serious bottom line. The current McGuinty government was asked today and he said he couldn't do anything, and yet he can render the most significant increase on the health tax and the HST that we've ever seen in this province. He has the tools; he just doesn't have the courage or the plan to use them. That's what's most disappointing here today. The Premier is causing 650 families to lose their jobs and lose their income. It's quite sad to see a leader who admits he's been defeated. That's the whole issue here today, and I commend the member from Timmins—James Bay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It kind of disappoints, saddens and really angers me to hear things from the members from the Liberal government who will say that to ask a company that is taking our natural resources to have a conversation with the Ontario government before you take our natural resources out of our province—those are not walls. What we're asking for is accountability from the industry that takes our natural resources before they take them out.

1630

If Kidd Creek was not profitable, they could maybe make a case. But the fact is that they don't have to be accountable to anybody. All they have to do is make a business decision, like my colleague says, that is solely motivated by greed, no matter what the effect, as catastrophic as it might be, on the city that they operate in. This doesn't come into the account at all. The only thing that counts is the mighty dollar, and if the mighty dollar says that there's a penny to be made by shipping our natural resources to any other province, Ontario will sit there and do nothing.

I don't call asking for accountability for our natural resources—this is not putting up trade walls. This is asking for accountability from the people who do business in Ontario from the resources that come from Ontario. Once those resources are gone, they are gone.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Bisson has up to two minutes for his response.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I want to thank all the members who participated in this debate. I want to pick up on points that were made earlier.

This is about accountability. All this bill does is say that if you're a mining operator in Ontario and you're going to ship your ore outside of Ontario for processing, you need to get ministerial permission. That allows a check and a balance to make sure that they make the case for why the ore has to leave in the first place. It is exactly what's in the bill now, except that we only do that when it's shipped outside of Canada.

I'm not proposing anything radical. I'm not proposing anything that's out of the ordinary. It's Ontario legislation. Take away the word "Canada" and put in the word "Ontario."

I say to my friends on the other side who argued, "This is about protectionism, and we're going to lose all

of the ore that comes from outside of Ontario because they won't ship here anymore for processing at our steel mills"—hogwash. Where do you think the iron ore comes from? It comes from outside Ontario. There's no iron ore mined in Ontario anymore since free trade. Most of it comes from the United States.

By the way, section 91 of the Mining Act would have no effect on them, because for Canada and Ontario, basically it would be the same provision. When you make these arguments that somehow or other this is protectionism, read your own legislation. What do you think you currently have in section 91?

I've got to say that, as a northerner, I was disappointed that the members of the Liberal caucus from northern Ontario didn't weigh in on this debate. They either have to have the courage to stand up and say, "I am in favour," or, "I am opposed." You can't try to play it both ways.

This is about public policy when it comes to the extraction of natural resources. We need to ensure that at the end, for those natural resources that are extracted from Ontario, the value-added is given here in this province so that we can all benefit from those activities across this province and build a better province on the basis of those resources.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time provided for private members' public business has now expired. Time to vote.

HEALTHY LIVING

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will deal first with ballot item number 13, standing in the name of Mr. Qaadri.

Mr. Qaadri has moved private member's notice of motion number 23. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

BRITISH HOME CHILD DAY ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LE JOUR DES PETITS IMMIGRÉS BRITANNIQUES

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will now deal with ballot item number 14, standing in the name of Mr. Brownell.

Mr. Brownell has moved second reading of Bill 12, An Act to proclaim British Home Child Day. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Brownell?

Mr. Jim Brownell: Speaker, I'd like Bill 12 referred to the justice policy committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Is it agreed that the bill be referred to the committee? Agreed. So ordered.

MINING AMENDMENT ACT
(RESOURCES PROCESSED
IN ONTARIO), 2010

LOI DE 2010 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LES MINES
(RESSOURCES TRANSFORMÉES
EN ONTARIO)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We'll now deal with ballot item number 15, standing in the name of Mr. Bisson.

Mr. Bisson has moved second reading of Bill 36, An Act to amend the Mining Act to require resources to be processed in Ontario. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

We will call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1635 to 1640.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing until counted by the Clerk.

Ayes

Barrett, Toby	Kormos, Peter	O'Toole, John
Bisson, Gilles	Marchese, Rosario	Prue, Michael
Gélinas, France	Miller, Norm	Tabuns, Peter
Hardeman, Ernie	Miller, Paul	

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): All those opposed to the motion will please rise and remain standing until counted by the Clerk.

Nays

Albanese, Laura	Fonseca, Peter	Ramal, Khalil
Arthurs, Wayne	Hoy, Pat	Rinaldi, Lou
Balkissoon, Bas	Jaczek, Helena	Ruprecht, Tony
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Klees, Frank	Sandals, Liz
Best, Margaret	Kular, Kuldip	Sergio, Mario
Brown, Michael A.	Levac, Dave	Sousa, Charles
Brownell, Jim	Moridi, Reza	Takhar, Harinder S.
Cansfield, Donna H.	Murray, Glen R.	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Colle, Mike	Pendergast, Leeanna	Zimmer, David
Dhillon, Vic	Phillips, Gerry	
Dickson, Joe	Qaadri, Shafiq	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 11; the nays are 31.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I declare the motion lost.

Second reading negatived.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): All matters relating to private members' public business having been completed, I do now call orders of the day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ELECTION STATUTE LAW
AMENDMENT ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
EN CE QUI CONCERNE LES ÉLECTIONS

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 27, 2010, on the motion for third reading of Bill 231, An Act to amend the Election Act and the Election Finances Act / Projet de loi 231, Loi modifiant la Loi électorale et la Loi sur le financement des élections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: I rise to talk about a bill that started off with so much promise and ended up giving so little.

I listened with some intent to my colleagues from both the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party who were actually in the same committee room that I was over a number of days, to hear them talk about what they had hoped or what was, in their view, accomplished during all of that debate and all of those deputations and all of the important topics that were talked about by people. Then I listened to what they actually think is contained within the body of the bill.

Before I speak, I wish to preface that I think there are a couple of good things in the body of the bill. Every bill has some good in it, and this bill is no exception. There are two things for which I commend this government—and two things only—contained within the body of the bill that will actually be an improvement to the current election law.

The first thing is that students can vote no matter where they are living in Ontario, so that if they are away at a university or college, they don't have to rush home on or about the election day in order to cast their ballot, with all the expense and all the time that that involves. When this was before the House at second reading, I believe I stood in this place and talked about my own experience, going back all those many years, in the fall provincial election of 1971. I was living with my parents at that time in the riding of Scarborough Centre and I was at Carleton University for my master's degree. I had to hop on the train the day before election day, come all the way back to Scarborough Centre, cast my vote and then go back the day after that in order that I could cast my very first vote. You see, I was 21. I was in university. I was studying political science; I was taking my master's degree. It was my first opportunity to cast a vote, and I was not about to miss it. But I wished that I could have voted there in Ottawa, during the Scarborough Centre election, because that's where I wanted to vote. I knew the candidates. I knew what I believed. I knew who I wanted to win; I knew who I wanted to vote for. But in order for me to vote there in Scarborough Centre, I had to physically be in Scarborough Centre.

It almost cost me my job at the time. You see, I was a teaching assistant as well, teaching political science to both a first-year university class and a second-year university class, and the professor of one of the classes called me to his office when I returned because he thought I had gone AWOL. I had left a note that I couldn't be there on election day in order to teach one of the classes in the evening, and that's because I had gone back to vote. When I explained to him what I had done, he asked me why I didn't vote by proxy, why I didn't do any of a number of things, but to me it was absolutely important to cast my ballot. So I am thankful that the government has allowed in this legislation that students can vote where they go to school, as well as where they live.

The second thing that I think is important, and for which I commend the government, that is contained in the body of the bill is the depoliticization of election-day workers. I do remember throughout my entire life that political parties would be asked prior to election day to submit lists of people who were favourable to them who could work as poll clerks, as DROs, as any number of workers on election day, within the bodies and the confines of the election process. And I do remember how that was done: The government in power would elect their half, and the people in the riding where you ran second to the government, if they won that seat, could put up the other half; if there was any left over, then a third party could have some of the nominations. This was important for election people, important for political parties, in the days before election finance reform came along, because people would have an opportunity to earn some money, and some of those people in turn would donate a portion of that back to the electoral process.

But we have gone far beyond that. We have a much better system of collecting monies. We have a much better system of rebates. The whole necessity of having people chosen by political parties to take these jobs that pay \$100, \$200 or \$300 for the day is no longer economically, socially or politically acceptable. It is a very good thing that this is about to be depoliticized, and again I take my hat off to the government for this second aspect of the bill.

But this is a very timid bill. It is weak, it is ineffective, it continues unfairness and it isn't going to do a whole lot to help the political process along the road of modernization. It continues to allow third party spending limits—it doesn't rein that in, so that a third party like the National Citizens Coalition, the families coalition or any of these other groups that can amass hundreds of thousands or millions of dollars are able to influence provincial elections. It does absolutely nothing to rein them in. I know that other provinces and the federal government are trying to do something about it, but this government in its wisdom has determined that it should not be part of this act.

It continues the reliance upon corporate and union donations, and we know that other governments around this country have said that this is not what should be done in a modern electoral system. We know, if you look at

some of the people who write books on this, that there is an undue influence by corporate Canada, by developers and by unions. There is that undue influence, to the point that provinces like Manitoba and Quebec and the federal government have banned this practice. We know that the city of Toronto, the largest municipality in the province, is banning this practice. But we have here a government in Ontario that doesn't want to look at that, that recognizes the inherent unfairness of the financial process around elections and just turns a blind eye to it and says absolutely nothing. It's fine by them. I guess that's because the cash is flowing in pretty well and they don't want to look out there and say, "Maybe that cash won't be there. Maybe ordinary people don't want to finance us because maybe ordinary people don't like what we're doing around issues like the HST. Oh no, we're not going to do that. We're just going to make sure that the corporate elite, some of our union friends and, more probably than not, the developers are going to come to our rescue." So there's nothing in this bill about that at all.

1650

They are totally leaving out whole sections around municipal elections. So even though there are minor reforms around allowing students to vote and the depoliticization of election day workers, nary a word is contained within this bill that deals with the municipal election procedure. And we know that next year is municipal election year. We know that the municipalities are asking for some form of reform around this issue. We know that the city of Toronto has come forward and begged this province to change some of the election laws to make them fairer. We know that the city of Vaughan, that city above Toronto, with all of the problems that they have, has advocated for electoral reform and is trying itself to reform it. They would welcome this province stepping in and setting ground rules for municipalities. We know that of the 440 or so municipalities left in the province of Ontario, literally all of them would welcome some form of electoral change, some form of tightening up of the election rules and the election financing rules—and yet there is nary a word contained.

When I listened to Mr. Sorbara—he's not a minister, but the member from Vaughan—who was in fact the lead for the government around this entire issue, he seemed to be nonplussed. The election reform, he said, was going to be minor. It was going to be agreed. It was going to be easy. It was going to be what was doable. And he did not want to step outside the narrow confines that I think he believed he had to reside within.

There was also nothing in the entire act that dealt with advertising by third parties, not only the expenditure of the monies but the advertising by third parties. And this is a giant loophole. We saw it in the last election. My friends the Conservatives spoke about it. The member from Halton spoke quite eloquently about advertising by third parties and the Working Families Coalition, which spent a lot of money to criticize the Conservatives on behalf of the Liberal Party of Ontario. I think the bitter-

ness he spoke with was palpable, that people understand that third parties are starting to have undue influence on our elections, so much so that other jurisdictions are dealing with it, but not the government of Ontario.

Those are all things that the government left out. What the government did not deal with—and I want to spend most of my time on this—was the whole issue of disability rights and the rights of disabled citizens to cast their vote in freedom and in the same way that people who are sighted, the same way that people who are mobile, the same way that people who do not have hearing impairments, take for granted. I sat there for four solid days, as did all the members of the committee, and watched person after person come into the committee room and speak to us about what they hoped would happen around accessibility issues. And we had some wonderful speakers who came in and talked to us. They told us about their own travails, their own difficulty in being able to vote.

We had Mr. Lepofsky, who I think was the lead for Ontarians with Disabilities, who came in and spoke brilliantly for 15 minutes, which was all the time allotted to him, about the difficulty that people who are disabled have voting. We had people on the telephone. There was a woman who was deaf-blind who talked about the impossibility of her voting at election time and how aids would assist her to cast her own vote so that she did not have to proxy someone to go out and vote on her behalf, so that she could actually go into a polling booth and vote for herself and what a liberating experience that would be for her.

We had Barbara Hall, who is the commissioner for human rights in Ontario, come and talk about the failure of past voting practices in Ontario and what we could, as a Legislature, do to ameliorate the conditions and change the law in order to allow people in wheelchairs, people who require aids in order to hear or to see—to make it better.

We had group upon group upon group come in and talk to us about their own personal experience. There was a gentleman who came in who was successful in suing the federal government and received a \$10,000 payment for not being able to vote, by pointing out that he had gone to the human rights authorities in Canada the election before and had outlined in considerable detail how he could not vote because he was in a wheelchair, how you had to go down a flight of stairs in order to cast your vote, how he had to get out of the wheelchair and go down on the seat of his pants down the stairs and drag himself into a place to vote. It was found that they had done him wrong, and they awarded him some \$10,000.

We had a candidate from the last by-election in Toronto Centre-Rosedale who gave us 25 or 30 full-coloured pictures of election day, showing all of the voting places that were not accessible to people in wheelchairs, all of the ones that had steps and not ramps, all of the ones that were covered with ice, all of the ones that had been changed at the last minute, taking them out of an accessible area and putting them into an in-

accessible area so that a basketball or a volleyball game could be played.

We listened to all of that, and at the end of all of that, I was hopeful that the Liberal members on the committee would want to do something for the disabled, would want to say that disabled Ontarians have every bit as much right to vote and participate in the electoral process as anyone else who does not have a disability.

We know that some 15% to 20% of all Ontarians have a disability. For some, it is a slight disability; for some, it is much more marked; for some, it's invisible, like those who are deaf; for some, it is clearly visible—if you are blind, if you are in a wheelchair—that you have that disability.

We need to start thinking about our citizens. A few years ago, we passed the Ontarians with Disabilities Act. We passed it and it's not going to come into law for 25 years. I think we're five years into it now. But there it is: 25 years from now there are not supposed to be any barriers to the disabled, but this government is not willing to speed up that process for our disabled Ontarians.

On that behalf, I was hoping against hope to get some movement, and I had the member from Vaughan who had the lead and I had the parliamentary assistant, Mr. Zimmer from Willowdale, who was there, and they kept bringing forth changes that were minor. They did not satisfy any of the disabled community who were in the room. They were minor. They were grudgingly, in my view, given. In the end, I think they failed the disabled community very much.

Among my many portfolios of which I am the critic, one of them is for the disability movement here in Ontario. I take that job very seriously, to listen to disabled Ontarians and try to ameliorate their lives and their opportunities to do what the rest of us take for granted.

One of the fundamental things that they want to do is to be able to vote in an election. They want to be able to go into a polling booth and cast their own vote, not to take someone with them who can mark their ballot without them knowing what it is, but to actually cast their own vote and have it verified.

We know from experience in other jurisdictions, including other jurisdictions and municipal jurisdictions in Ontario, that this can be done. We know that a small little place like the town of Cobourg and the town of Peterborough have already set up those kinds of voting machines, understanding that the disabled citizens need to be able to mark their own ballots, so that even if you can't see, you can mark the ballot. You can push a button and the button will tell you who you voted for. You can listen to that and you can say that's acceptable and put your own ballot in the ballot box.

Isn't that something we would want for all citizens? They can vote themselves. They can understand how they voted. They can say that their ballot is correct. They can put it in the box and they can leave like you or I leave, knowing that we have cast our vote in a great democracy. But no, this government did not want to listen to that. They did not want to do anything.

1700

Time after time after time, the member from Willowdale, the parliamentary assistant, and the member from Vaughan, who had the lead on behalf of the government, kept talking about the expense. Everything was, "How much money is this going to cost?" Yes, it might cost some money, I acknowledge that, but what is the cost of not doing that? What is the cost to the disabled community that they have to forever after say that they are second-class citizens, that they can't cast their vote in the same way, that they can't go down a hall and vote, that they can't go down those stairs into a gymnasium in the basement, that they can't work on election day because there are no disabled washrooms and you have to be there for some 12 hours, even though they may be fully competent do the job? I listened. I listened to them and listened to them, and I think we all listened to them.

In the end, we tried to do something. We put forward some 30 recommendations. I am proud to say that on almost every one of the recommendations that I tried to put forward on behalf of the disability community of Ontario, my colleagues in the Conservative Party voted for them—I think with one exception. They voted 29 times with me and with the disabled community to do the right thing, and 29 times Liberals voted no; 29 times every single hand went up on every single issue to say that the disability community could not have equal access in times of election.

I just want to read what some of those motions were, what we tried to do. To my mind, I still don't understand why they wouldn't vote for it. They simply said, "No, it's not going to happen." They gave all of the authority over to Mr. Essensa. Mr. Essensa is the Chief Electoral Officer of Ontario. In my view, Mr. Essensa does a good job. I was there on the hiring committee and I voted for him. I knew him from the city of Toronto before that. He did a good job in the city of Toronto as well. But that is not the issue. The issue is fairness to the disabled. The issue is not to leave it up to one person, who may or may not by whim do what is correct, but to put and enshrine in the legislation that every single disabled person has every bit as much right and all the rights that everyone else has: the right to go into a polling booth, the right to cast a ballot, the right to verify that ballot, the right to work on election day, the right to have access to the building itself and to the washrooms contained therein—all of those rights.

We put forward the following motions, every one of which the five Liberal members present voted against. I want everybody to understand. I'm going to read these and you're going to say, "How could you vote against that?" You're going to ask yourselves, those Liberals who were not there, "How could we vote against that?" I'll be darned if I know how they could vote against that, and perhaps some of you will ask yourselves that question.

We moved that the Election Act refers to Elections Ontario either posting information on the Internet or on a website to be required to be published in a fully

accessible format, and then there's a whole bunch of language which I don't understand, "W3C WCAG 2.0 Level AA or higher," and I understand that that's a format that is accessible to people who have disabilities. We asked that all of these things be put in a format so that the disabled could read them, could understand them. It was voted down. The government doesn't want this to be in a format that they can read.

The second thing we moved was that there could be no modifications unless Elections Ontario certifies that they are fully accessible to and barrier-free for voters and candidates with disabilities. Therefore, there could not be modifications in the place where people voted unless an Elections Ontario official went in and said that they were in fact barrier-free. That was voted down. Elections officials will not be able to go in and do that. Modifications can be made that actually turn some place that is barrier-free into some place that is not. This was very strange when the government all voted against this.

Then the next one came along. We moved that, no later than the scheduled 2015 Ontario election—that's not this one but the one after that—Elections Ontario have available to voters with disabilities across Ontario accessible voting machines which will enable voters with print disabilities the ability to independently vote in privacy and to verify their choice.

We know that these machines are available throughout North America. We know that they are used extensively in the United States. We know that they are used in the city of Peterborough and in the city of Toronto, we know they are used in Cobourg, and we know that they are pretty well tamper-proof.

The government voted this down. In the 2015—never mind the 2011 election, but in the 2015 election, there will be no such machines to aid the disabled. I don't know why the government voted against this, but they did, because they never gave any rationale at any time for any of these except that, "It may be costly."

We went on to request that Elections Ontario make public by a designated date its plans for technology after consulting on it with persons with disabilities. The government voted that down. They don't want to consult with the disabled community or to make public to the disabled community and others how technology might be used—voted down as well.

We went on to say that Elections Ontario be required to make public by accessible formats, Internet sites and the media, the availability and location of accessible voting machines, because, you see, the member from Vaughan said, "Maybe these machines are expensive. Maybe we can't have them in every polling station. Maybe we can only have them in two or three places in a riding so that people would have to go to those two or three places in a riding in order to vote because these machines, of course, may cost a few thousand dollars for the day and we can't be spending that kind of money just to let the disabled vote."

We asked that this information be made public: if there were only one or two machines available in some

urban ridings and the disabled were able to go from one location to another by cab or with family or anything else, that this be made independently known to them so that they would know where to go to vote so they didn't have to go down flights of stairs and they didn't have to go into places that were not generally accessible. The answer was, "No. You can't have that either. We're voting against this."

Again, I find it very difficult to understand why they don't want to make a list public. The member from Vaughan did say that it was the government's intention to try to do something for 2015, that there would be one accessible voting machine in every riding, but it would not be available on election day; it would only be available in the advance polls so that somebody in a riding could go to the advance poll and vote with this accessible machine prior to election day but not on election day. So, because there would only be one, people would have to know where it was.

When we pointed out to him that my riding in Beaches-East York, which is only about eight square kilometres—that's all it is; it's in downtown Toronto. It is a very tight and very small geographic area, and probably most of the downtown Toronto ridings or even GTA ridings are relatively easy to get around with public transit and relatively easy to get around in terms of the geographic size. "But what about ridings in northern Ontario?" we questioned. How are you going to be able to make these disability-type machines available to people in far-flung regions in Timmins-James Bay, Kenora-Rainy River, Thunder Bay-Superior North, Manitoulin? How are you going to make these people be able to use the machines? You can't just tell them, if they live in Attawapiskat, "Come and use the disabled machines in downtown Timmins." It's several thousand kilometres away by airplane. It's not going to happen. That's not what the intent was here; the intent was to make them generally available. The government shrugged its shoulders and said, "I guess, then, we're not going to do it."

We went on to talk about broadening the criteria for home visits, to remove barriers to the use of voters with disabilities where needed, and to remove the sweeping discretion given to Elections Ontario over who will receive a home visit. You see, although the government bill allows for home visits, it is the electoral returning officer in each jurisdiction who determines whether or not a person is eligible to have that home visit where a ballot and a ballot box are taken to them to allow them to vote. At the discretion of the returning officer, you may be told yes or no. If the answer is no, there is no appeal. What we tried to point out is the need to take away that discretion, so that if somebody requested it and believes they need it, it is made available to them. That too was shot down.

1710

We went on to ask for special ballot kits and voting procedures to enable voters with disabilities to independently mark their ballot in privacy and verify their

choice. It was intended as well that a special type of reading machine would be made available so that the voter would know they had voted privately and independently and would be satisfied by the time the returning officer left their home.

We went on to talk about other things that were really important: to require Elections Ontario to undertake research about voting accessibility and require that the results of their research be made public. You would think this was a bit of a no-brainer, because the Liberal members who were there said there was going to be lots of research done by Elections Ontario over the next few years, and I take them at their word that there will be. So we asked that that be made public. Do you think that was a hard thing? That was an impossible thing for the Liberals, to actually have it made public. They voted down this provision too. They can do all the research they want, but there is no provision within the law that it will ever be made public. The disability community shook their heads, those who were there, in disbelief that this government would not release the information, if it was collected, so that they would better be able to determine whether or not we were moving down that magic road, 25 years or 21 years from now, when the disabled community will have full access in Ontario.

We went on to talk about the research that the Ontario government is going to do to investigate options for ensuring election accessibility, that they should look at some of the experience in other jurisdictions, particularly and easily in the jurisdiction immediately to the south of us—that is, the United States. We know, after the disastrous election in the United States with the hanging chads and the election of George Bush and all the schmozzle in the Supreme Court and everything that happened, that there were many instances of disabled people in that country saying that they could not cast their ballot, that it was just too difficult, and that even if they cast their ballot, they don't know whether it was correct or what they intended to do with the ballot. They had no way of verifying it.

The American government took this very seriously, and they have made huge strides and modifications to ensure that the voting procedures are fairer, that they can be understood by the disabled community, that the disabled individual does not have to leave the safe confines of the voting booth until they verify themselves that the vote was as they intended. It does not cost the earth. It is being done now at reduced cost election after election, to the point that it is now well within the realm of possibility.

We merely asked that this government instruct Elections Ontario to go out and study the experience in the United States and include that in their report and make it available to the disabled community. The answer, unfortunately, as in everything else, was no.

We requested that Elections Ontario get funds to do their research. The answer was no.

We asked that there be a level access to a plainly visible public entrance to the building in which the voting

place is to be located, without a voter needing to ascend or descend any stairs. The answer was no. This is what you're doing—the answer is no. So if you show up and there's no marking and there is a set of stairs and you are in a wheelchair or a scooter and you don't know where you have to go, there is no requirement in the law that it be plain, accessible and without stairs. When that motion was made, five Liberals put up their hands and said no. Can you tell me why you would say no? I don't understand why you would say no. It would seem to me that's a pretty logical thing to put into law, that you don't have any stairs when you know that up to 20% of your population has some kind of disability, and that disability can just be a bad-sight disability that makes it difficult to go up and down dimly lit stairs; it can be a wheelchair; it can be any number of disabilities. The answer was no. I don't understand that.

We went on to say that there has to be level, unobstructed access from the accessible entrance to the building to the voting place within the building without a voter needing to ascend or descend any stairs. So, once you get inside the building, even if you could walk into the building, occasionally inside you are required to go downstairs. For example, you go into the foyer of a school and you vote in the gymnasium underneath. So we had to do both. You can't go up the stairs to go into the school and you can't go down the stairs once you're inside the school—same rationale, same answer from the government: No.

We went on to say that any doorway from the outside of the building and inside the building en route to the voting place within the building is sufficiently wide to enable a person using a mobility aid to pass through. We know that, thanks to technology, many people who otherwise would have to have a wheelchair or who would otherwise have considerable difficulty walking are starting to avail themselves of motor scooters, those little scooters you see all over the roads. You see them everywhere in Ontario. No matter what town or city I go to, I see people in those mobility scooters who get around. They go to do their shopping. They go to church. They go to doctors' appointments. They go to the bank. They visit their friends. They're in these little scooters. It is liberating to them. But they're a little wide, and you know that sometimes they can't go through some of the doorways. You've all seen this happen.

We simply asked that in setting up a building, renting a building or using a building, whether it be a church, a school or anything else, the doorway has to be wide enough to allow that scooter to go in and out. The answer was no—no.

Can anybody over there tell me why you would say no to that? The answer was no. So I guess if you show up in a scooter and the doorway is too narrow, you have the choice of getting out of the scooter, if you're able to walk a few steps to go wherever you're going—

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Prue: No, no. The answer was no. So then we went on to say that, well, you've got a school

and you can't get the scooter in, so can you at least have a provision that the elector need not travel more than 50 metres on foot after entering the building to reach the voting place? So if you can't get the scooter in but you have a cane and you can struggle as best you can, can it at least be less than 50 metres away from the place where you can't get your scooter in to where you have to vote? The answer was no. They all voted against that, too.

We went on to ask for other things—and I'm standing here and I'm smiling because I'm looking at the disbelief on the faces over there about their own colleagues and what they vote for.

Mr. John O'Toole: Who was on that committee?

Mr. Michael Prue: Mr. Sorbara was the lead, the member from Vaughan. The parliamentary assistant was the member from Willowdale, and the others took their instructions and voted as told.

Then we said that for those who have difficulty seeing, the voting place must have sufficient lighting to accommodate the needs of persons with low vision. We know there is a certain lux standard where people can see easily, and if the light is too dim, it is difficult for people to see. It is even difficult for someone who is sighted like me, who requires glasses to read, to see in low and dim light. Anybody who has glasses over there knows that's the case. If you don't have sufficient light and if the print is small, then it is difficult to read unless the light is turned up. It's one of the things you need to have.

So we asked that the Chief Electoral Officer ensure in any of the voting locations that the light is of sufficient lux and standard that a person even with low vision will be able to read the instructions and the ballots. The answer was no, that is not a requirement. It can be as dimly lit as you want. Liberals are all convinced that the dimmer it is lit, I guess, the better it is, because there is no standard and no requirement that the light be of a sufficient lux to allow.

1720

We went on to say that we would require the cabinet to review the regulations, when they eventually make them, after further input from the public, including Ontarians with disabilities, after the 2011 election. So we said, "Go ahead with the next election. Try all your stuff out. Listen to the general public about whether or not it worked. Listen to the disability community. See what recommendations they have. And then report after the next general election. If you're not going to pass any of our things, at least try that." The answer was, "No, we're not going to do that. We're not going to report. We're not going to have the cabinet report. We're not going to have anybody report. We're not going to listen to the disability community in any meaningful way. And we're not going to publish any results after the next election." That's what this government is all about.

Then we went on to ask for simple, simple, simple things: that there be a disability parking space, a temporary parking space like you see in every city. You see those little wheelchairs? All of the pages know where those wheelchairs are. You have to have a disability

permit to park in that parking space. We wanted a disability parking space set up at every major location where people come to vote, because very often, especially in urban areas, there are five or six or seven polling stations in each church or each—we're only asking for one disability space, so that if somebody shows up in a wheelchair or a scooter or with canes or whatever mobility things they have and they're disabled, they get to park close and come inside. On election day, put in a disability space to help. And the answer again, incredibly, was, "No. The disabled can park on the other side of the parking lot." There is no provision that allows the Chief Electoral Officer to put up a sign for the day that would designate that as a disabled space close to the door that would allow somebody disabled to come in and vote. I thought that was a pretty reasonable thing, but five members on the Liberal side of the committee didn't think it was reasonable at all. So we asked some more.

We asked that there be an election accessibility hotline during the six-month period before and on voting day for voters and candidates with disabilities to give feedback on proposed locations for voting places, and to give feedback and present inquiries on any accessibility programs; a hotline so that you could phone up, so you didn't have to go through the myriad of stuff and phone candidates and phone people who didn't know what they were doing, but a hotline, somebody who could pick up the phone and settle the problem leading up to and on election day. The answer was no.

We asked that the government review the proposed locations of voting places in light of the feedback that they received from this hotline and from other sources and to look at whether or not things could be done better. The answer was no. Five people voted no to all these.

We asked—this one really got me. There are only 107 returning offices in the 107 ridings in Ontario. Each one has a returning officer. Each one has an office located generally in an urban area. Even in a place like Timmins—James Bay, it's in Timmins. In my own riding of Beaches—East York in Toronto, it's generally on the Danforth. They try to find a location in a centralized location that is generally accessible to the majority of people. We asked that the returning officer's office in any riding be accessible, so that if you need to go into the returning office to file papers if you're a candidate, to get on the electoral list if your name has been left off, or any other matter that you have, we ask that it be accessible. The answer was no, no, no.

We asked that persons with disabilities, especially those who are deaf and hard-of-hearing, have a dedicated TTY line; you know how you can type in and ask questions and someone can type back to you? Very many people in the deaf community have a TTY line in their homes so that they can answer the phone and they can speak to people who are calling them. You have all had the experience, I'm sure, of using a TTY line—that every returning office have a TTY line for the deaf and hard-of-hearing community. The answer was no. Five members stood there every single time and said no. So there is no

requirement in law that it be accessible for people to go in and no requirement that it be accessible so that people on a TTY line can phone in if they're deaf or hard-of-hearing.

We asked a very simple question, the next one—they were all simple—for those who are hard-of-seeing. We asked that the ballots be made a little larger and the print on the ballots be made larger. I explained to my colleagues, all of whom were wearing glasses to read the fine print like me, that if I forgot my glasses, I myself probably couldn't read the ballot. So could you please make sure that it's in at least a 26-point font, the name and the place where you put the X, so that people, even if they have glasses and they're not blind—they're not that impaired, but they need glasses—if they forget their glasses, could the ballot be made large enough with 26-point font or 28-point font so that it could be read by people without glasses, so that nobody would be put out when it came time to vote? The answer was no. You can't even have a ballot that's large enough to read without glasses.

I don't understand. You're going to have two minutes each; stand up and tell me why you would do this. You vote no to everything.

We went on. I asked another couple of simple things—that there be an independent survey of candidates and electors with disabilities, particularly the candidates. We know that we've had some excellent candidates in the past who have been disabled. We know that there is a member of Parliament in Ottawa who is disabled, and he does a very good job.

Interjection: A smart man.

Mr. Michael Prue: A very smart man, very capable. We know, those of us who have been around here for a while, that Gary Malkowski used to represent the riding of York East. He was deaf. He had a signer here. But he had to be a candidate before then, and what we were saying was that the candidates who identified themselves with some form of disability should be canvassed at the end of the election, and that there should be an independent survey of those candidates with disabilities on any barriers or difficulties they experienced when taking part in the election. The answer was no—don't want to know; don't care: "There's nothing we're going to do. We're not voting for that amendment."

I asked for another thing. I said, could there be a summary of any complaints or feedback received from electors or candidates with disabilities during the election regarding the accessibility of the election and any steps the government or the elections committee would take to fix that? The answer was no.

I asked for recommendations of any steps that needed to be taken to ensure that the next election will be fully accessible to electors and candidates with disabilities and, in fact, be barrier-free. All I wanted from that were recommendations that they would make, and that the government would be forced to either say yes or no or act upon them before the 2015 election. The answer was no.

I asked that the bill be amended to require that candidates select an accessible location for his or her

campaign office. Now, this was controversial, and I must admit this was somewhat controversial. It would have required the candidates from major parties in Ontario, those who were running full slates of candidates, to ensure that their office, out of which the campaign was run, was accessible, so that when they were choosing a temporary location, generally for four to six or eight weeks, they made sure that there were no barriers to entering the office and, wherever feasible and possible, that washrooms would be located on the first floor, so that people who were disabled and who wanted to participate in the electoral process beyond that of simply voting would have an opportunity, through the candidate of their choice, to go out and give some time, whether that was time on the telephones, time putting stamps on envelopes, time canvassing or interacting with the public who came through the door.

I thought that was a reasonable thing, but I do understand that of all the suggestions I made, this one might rankle some people because you were telling candidates what they had to do in an election. But I do think it's a fair thing and something that we should be striving towards. I do understand why some of the Liberal members might have said no to this, but I still think it is a good idea. They didn't tell me why they weren't voting for it, but they all voted no.

The next was that we would require each party and candidate to make available upon a request, without undue delay, their campaign literature in alternate formats, including large print, Braille and an accessible electronic format so that people who were disabled could understand what the candidate's message was going to be.

1730

Again, this is a little controversial but I don't think that hard. If the government said that this is the desire and the will that everything be accessible, then somebody on their election team would have to be able to print the literature in larger format. Somebody on the election team would have to be able to go down to the CNIB and acquire, in whole or in part, the campaign literature translated into Braille where it was requested. I do realize that this is an expense, but I also think that it's necessary. Something could be done under the election expenses act to make this a non-campaign expense because it may involve several hundred dollars which a candidate who is running close to the line was not counting on, but I still think it was a good idea. Every single Liberal hand said no.

I then went on to ask that in television advertisements, because they're all done by the parties, not by the individual candidates—the Liberal Party will run television ads, the NDP will run television ads, the Conservatives will run television ads, and in all likelihood, in the next election the Greens will run ads too; Family Coalition, if they're running, may run ads. If you're running an ad, you have to have a signer at the bottom or a teletype that goes across. Just like here in the Legislature, you have the teletype go across, and oc-

asionally we have signers who tell you in plain, simple American Sign Language what is being said. If you are deaf, you can watch the program and not understand what it's about, but if you have it signed or if you have it electronically read at the bottom, then you would know what it's about. We simply asked that for any major expense the political parties are making around television advertising, that that was included. It has almost no cost to the parties once the ad is prepared, almost no cost. The answer was, "No, can't do that; won't do that."

We asked that the bill be amended to prohibit the holding of all-candidates debates in a forum, in a venue that is inaccessible. Now, we know—I listened to the argument, and I know that this was controversial to some extent—that people, home and school associations, ratepayers, homeowners groups, church groups, civic-minded organizations, when they are holding an all-candidates debate, attempt to do so and understand that it has to be in a place that is accessible so that it will accommodate the greatest number of citizens who want to come out and hear and will also accommodate any of those candidates—because you don't know in advance—who may be in their own right unable to attend unless there is wheelchair access or some signing provision or others when they are running. We asked that this be done. The answer was no.

Last but not least, and one of my great disappointments here, was that this bill does absolutely nothing to empower municipalities in holding fair elections, absolutely nothing. I pointed out to the member from Vaughan, who had the lead, I pointed out to the parliamentary assistant, and I pointed out to all of those Liberals who sat there for four days: What kind of an election is it going to be in the municipal government when you are not including them in this bill, when you are not telling them what has to happen in order to make their elections fairer? Now, I don't think the municipalities need as much pushing as this government might think. The municipalities are discovering wonderful ways to include all of their citizens. They are, in some cases, light years ahead of this province. The city of Toronto is light years ahead of this province, the town of Cobourg is light years ahead of this province and the town of Peterborough is light years ahead of this province because they're already starting to make voting accessible; they're already looking at ways in which people with disabilities can be accommodated. The corporation of the town of Cobourg—and I just received this; there's a memo dated October 21, 2009, concerning the Municipal Elections Act—has passed unanimously in that council authorization for the clerk to do the following: that in 2006 the corporation provided a totally integrated electoral system for the corporation, which enabled an elector to choose from a range of voting options: (1) vote by Touch-Tone telephone, (2) Internet voting or (3) traditional attendance at a polling station.

They asked the staff, in consultation with the former municipal clerk, to investigate other available voting technologies with the objectives of making voting as

convenient as possible for electors, while at the same time ensuring reliability, security and the integrity of the election procedures. As was the experience in 2006, it is anticipated that participation in the electoral process and voter turnout would increase as a result of more convenient, tried and tested methods.

They gave their own experience. This allowed for no voting locations that were inaccessible. It eliminated traditional advance voting. There were no proxies. They gave easier access. They allowed people with disabilities to vote from the comfort of their own homes and to verify how they were voting from their own homes.

The city of Peterborough spent some money, and we had a deputant who came and gave deputation on the city of Peterborough's experience with voting machines. It seemed like a very good experience and worked very well for the people of Peterborough who had disabilities.

We know the city of Toronto is experimenting with voting machines, and we know that they have used in the past and will continue to use other alternative methods of voting. We know in rural Ontario that they have mail-in ballots. We know in places around Ontario they are using technology such as computers and telephones in order to advance the cause of voting. But the province of Ontario seems to me to be totally hidebound when it comes to this very issue. The province of Ontario will not accept anything other than what the members in the committee are told to do by the parliamentary assistant. They voted down every single reasonable, rational way of allowing people who are disabled to vote with independence.

I have to say, it was not a good experience for me to sit there for four days and listen to every single good idea be shot down without explanation. But as bad as it was for me, as the NDP disabilities critic, it was worse for the people who sat there for four days full of hope. Mr. Lepofsky, who is a brilliant man, absolutely brilliant, and an advocate on behalf of the disabled, was there. I think he was there in somewhat disbelief by the fourth day. He referred to some of the attitudes of some of the members as being archaic. I corrected him. I don't think they were archaic; I think they were antediluvian—that which existed before the flood—because there was nothing in there that anybody was changing from the way we have voted in this country since 1867 and before. It's a paper ballot in an inaccessible church hall, not understanding that so many of our citizens no longer can be accommodated in such a place. It was not allowing for new technology, and it was not allowing the opportunity for people to use gifts that they have in order to be fully accessible.

I was somewhat ashamed by the end of those four days. I know that the disappointment in the room was palpable. There were statements made by every single one of the deputants that they hoped this next election would be the first one that was truly barrier-free, and if it couldn't be the first one that was truly barrier-free, that at least it should be the last one where artificial barriers were set up to those with disabilities.

In the end, nothing was done. There will be no reports. There will be no evidence gathered, save and except that

which the Chief Electoral Officer wants to gather. There will be no reports by independent people. There will be no commissions. There will be nothing to ensure that access is barrier-free or that there will not be stairways that block those in wheelchairs. There will be no TTY phones in the offices. There will be nothing.

I'm looking forward to the questions and comments, if my honourable friends have been listening to all this. You've got two minutes each. You'll get two opportunities. That's four minutes to explain to me, to the disabled community and to this House why you think that this bill is accommodating the needs of 20% of our population.

1740

I want to hear it from your own lips. I haven't heard it in committee. I haven't heard it in debate here, except to pat oneself on the back and say, "We listened to the disabled community." I want to hear why these 25 or 30 recommendations that were made were wrong and why these 25 or 30 recommendations would not have revolutionized for the disabled an opportunity to vote in this province. Liberals have to be on the record on this, and I'm asking you to do so.

I would say in my last minute or two, I thank my Conservative colleagues on the committee. They voted and spoke eloquently on the majority of these motions in favour of extending that opportunity to the disabled community, which they had not heretofore. They voted for them and you can see the recorded votes there, recorded with me.

They were enlightened on this; the government members were not. It is not too late. You can send this back. You can do the right thing, or you can all put up your hands and vote for such a seriously flawed bill, understanding that you have done irreparable harm to those who have sought your help in trying to do something in the 21st century to alleviate the problems of our disabled. If you don't do that and you accept what this is, then pat yourself on the back some more.

It is, as I said before, nothing but a weak and ineffective bill, save and except for those provisions involving students and those who get jobs on election day. Those are the only two good things that can be said about it because what you needed to do foremost and what had to be done for the benefit of all was what you needed to do for the disabled and, in that, you failed miserably.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I just wanted to compliment the member from Beaches–East York on the way he went through his litany of amendments that were quite reasonable and respectable for the issue of persons with disabilities in Ontario being accommodated in an election.

What's surprising is how the government members were whipped into negative behaviour and that they bought that holus-bolus. I think it was a very good article by Jim Coyle on April 7 saying it was toothless in that section of the bill. More importantly—I'm not going to have time today because we're running out of time

here—I want to talk about the third party advertising which was not in the bill.

Initially I thought the Working Families Coalition was supporting the NDP, and probably should have been. They were stealing NDP money actually. But they were clearly supporting Premier McGuinty and I think that Working Families Coalition—I've got the disclosure here and the names and the millions of dollars, almost always union money. I was surprised at how they had somehow acquiesced to this program we see that's kind of devastated Ontario; now we have 10% unemployment. I'm not sure they got what they paid for. Some of the public sector did. We saw that in the sunshine list. But I think this was a serious omission in not dealing with this third party advertising part.

The member from Beaches—East York, I think, eloquently and effectively pointed out the shortcomings in this bill that have been addressed in the media. The amendments were moved in committee, which he sat on, and I think were reasonable amendments to accommodate persons. There's no politics in that. I can't believe that the Liberal members all unanimously defeated those reasonable amendments. So, for that reason, I can't see any reason that this bill does what it's supposed to do.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Mr. Prue, the member from Beaches—East York, knows what he's talking about. He worked on that committee when they were reviewing the rather lacklustre—thoroughly lacklustre piece of legislation that the government produced.

I was substituting for Howard Hampton on the Sorbara committee that had the opportunity to consider a wide range of things, but was denied the opportunity to do so by the government, which made it very clear that any reforms around elections here in the province of Ontario were going to be the most modest of reforms.

Surely one of the key areas of interest during that Sorbara committee period—Mr. Zimmer was on there for the government—was concerns around persons with disabilities and their right to vote. You see, not accommodating persons with disabilities denies them their right to vote, and what kind of democratic society would deny a member their right to vote?

Cathy Crowe, who was the NDP candidate in Toronto Centre in this province's most recent by-election, appeared in front of the committee with the old proverbial—the Arlo Guthrie 8 by 10 glossies, circles and arrows on each one, pointing out, in the instance of three polling stations, their inaccessibility. We're not talking about 100 years ago; we're talking about 2010. We're talking about a period in time after everybody has committed themselves to ensuring access, we're talking about a period in time after the government has passed legislation that they say demonstrates their commitment to access, yet what has the government come up with in this bill? What Mr. Lepofsky described as a baby step. Mr. Lepofsky has to maintain a rapport with the government, because he's going to be advocating for the dis-

abled, I suspect, for a good chunk of time, regrettably—not regrettable that Lepofsky is doing it, but it's going to take that long.

It's time for the members of this assembly to stand up and say no to legislation that continues to deny access to the disabled.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'm honoured to stand up and comment on the speech of the member from Beaches—East York. I listened to him a little bit, off and on, speaking about this important issue.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Off and on? Every once in a while when you came to?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Actually, I was outside listening to it on the TV because it's more clear. Honestly, when you sit outside there, we have a big TV and you can see well and you can focus on his speech.

I listened to him, and I know he brought up a lot of different important initiatives. I agree with some of it, but I think he'll agree with us—as elected officials, you know, we have an election strategy, a method that has been used for many years. I think that, over time, technology has progressed, and we have to change our way of elections. I think it's very important to create an accessibility method to allow the people of Ontario to participate in elections, whether electronically, whether we create a method so that people can go in wheelchairs to vote, and also to modify and create a new mechanism to allow more people in the province of Ontario to participate in elections, especially the youth, people with disabilities, racial minorities and many different aspects and elements of our society.

So I know he brought up many different points, but I still believe that if this bill passes, it will be an important step toward a reformed Election Act in the province of Ontario, which has not been touched for many years. I think Mr. Sorbara, as the Chair of this committee, listened to many caucus members from both sides. He listened to a lot of people, people who have been involved in elections for many, many years. They took their input, put it together and created this bill. Well, you know what? Whatever we do in life, we're not going to see the acceptance from all people. At least it's a good step forward toward reforming our elections in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I too want to commend the member from Beaches—East York for the fine—

Interjection: Rendition.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: —rendition, shall we say, of the elections bill.

I too was somewhat taken aback by the fact that so many amendments which would seem so simple to implement or to mandate so it would happen, particularly an issue as simple as to say that when you set up a polling station somewhere, it should have a place for the handicapped to park so they can go in and vote—it's rather interesting. I remember going to a place to vote

and, in fact, when I drove up, because of what was on the side of the vehicle, I wasn't allowed to go into the schoolyard. If the vehicles aren't allowed into the schoolyard, how is someone who can't walk supposed to get in to vote? It seems almost incomprehensible that they wouldn't have included things like that to make it accessible for people to vote.

Again, on the issue of people who can't read the ballot, not everyone wants to make the mark not knowing where it's going, because in fact they may have a spoiled ballot. If they've gone to all the trouble of going to vote, I'm sure that they expect that vote to be counted. As the member suggested, if they didn't bring their glasses, they wouldn't know whether that was in fact true. Again, it seems fairly simple to change the format to make the printing just a little bit larger on all ballots so everyone could see it and it would be equal for everyone who voted.

I want to commend him for the job well done and I guess somewhat chide the government for saying no to so many good amendments that would have made this bill a better piece of legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Prue has two minutes for his response.

Mr. Michael Prue: I thank the members from Durham, Welland, London-Fanshawe and Oxford, and I thank them especially for listening to what I had to say, because they did talk about those selfsame issues that I tried to bring forward.

To the member from London-Fanshawe, he was the only Liberal who stood up to speak, although there were opportunities for two. At least he stood up. He set out what the government's position is. Quite frankly, the government's position is a little tiny step forward. It's going to make some very slight, small improvement to the elections laws. We've been dealing with this for a century, and if this little change takes place, it will be just that little bit better than it has been in the past.

I acknowledge what he is saying. I accept—no, I don't accept what he's saying; I should be honest. I don't accept what he's saying because this is an opportunity for a law that only comes every 10, 12 or 15 years, when improvements are being made. This was an opportunity to embrace technology. This was an opportunity for the government to stand squarely behind the disabled community.

I stood up in my place as an opposition member and voted for the Ontarians with disabilities law that this

government brought forward in its first mandate. I stood up and voted for it because I thought that in the long term, the government was heading in the right direction, requiring full access to all government services, all private services, all schools, all hospitals and all public institutions and that they would become barrier-free. I lamented that it was going to take 25 years, and I still do, but I did vote for that bill, full in the knowledge that this government—or hoping this government—was committed to, as rapidly as possible, changing the lives of the disabled.

This would have been a very easy task. This bill could have embraced the Ontarians with disabilities legislation and could have moved the yardstick, but the government has determined in its wisdom not to do so, and it is a lost opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Seeing none, Mr. Bentley has moved third reading of Bill 231, An Act to amend the Election Act and the Election Finances Act. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I hear a no.

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I have received a deferral slip from the chief government whip. This vote will be deferred until next Monday during deferred votes.

Third reading vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Orders of the day.

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I hear a no.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Mr. Peter Kormos: On division.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): "On division" will be recorded.

This House stands adjourned till next Monday at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1754.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Aggelonitis, Hon. / L'hon. Sophia (LIB)	Hamilton Mountain	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington-Halton Hills	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Arthurs, Wayne (LIB)	Pickering-Scarborough East / Pickering-Scarborough-Est	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia-Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough-Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand-Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	Attorney General / Procureur général
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough-Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Brotten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse
		Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma-Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Caplan, David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Carroll, M. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham-Unionville	Minister of Tourism and Culture / Ministre du Tourisme et de la Culture
Chiarelli, Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West-Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean	
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds-Grenville	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton-Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Crozier, Bruce (LIB)	Essex	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
		Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga-Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax-Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale-High Park	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (LIB)	Prince Edward-Hastings	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Energy and Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Énergie et de l'Infrastructure
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor-Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement
		Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Dunlop, Garfield (PC) Elliott, Christine (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord Whitby—Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB) Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB)	Oakville Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Gélinas, France (NDP) Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Nickel Belt Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry / Ministre du Développement du Nord, des Mines et des Forêts
Hampton, Howard (NDP) Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Kenora—Rainy River Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Hoy, Pat (LIB) Hudak, Tim (PC)	Chatham—Kent—Essex Niagara West—Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest—Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jaczek, Helena (LIB) Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Oak Ridges—Markham Brampton—Springdale	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Johnson, Rick (LIB) Jones, Sylvia (PC) Klees, Frank (PC) Kormos, Peter (NDP) Kular, Kuldip (LIB) Kwinter, Monte (LIB) Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB) Leal, Jeff (LIB) Levac, Dave (LIB) MacLeod, Lisa (PC) Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock Dufferin—Caledon Newmarket—Aurora Welland Bramalea—Gore—Malton York Centre / York-Centre Glengarry—Prescott—Russell Peterborough Brant Nepean—Carleton Mississauga—Brampton South / Mississauga—Brampton-Sud	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP) Martiniuk, Gerry (PC) Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	Trinity—Spadina Cambridge London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB) McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McMeekin, Ted (LIB)	Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough— Westdale	
McNeely, Phil (LIB) Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa—Orléans Ottawa—Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC) Miller, Paul (NDP)	Parry Sound—Muskoka Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Hon. / L'hon. Carol (LIB)	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Munro, Julia (PC)	York-Simcoe	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	
Murray, Glen R (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Oraziotti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB)	Kitchener-Conestoga	
Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (LIB)	Elgin-Middlesex-London	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (LIB)	Scarborough-Agincourt	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres
		Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées
		Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
		Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches-East York	
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Economic Development and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London-Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland-Quinte West	
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Nipissing	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales
		Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton-Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto-Danforth	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga-Erindale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	
Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Perth-Wellington	Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener-Waterloo	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Garfield Dunlop
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Robert Bailey
Robert Bailey, Gilles Bisson
Jim Brownell, Kim Craitor
Bob Delaney, Garfield Dunlop
Amrit Mangat, Phil McNeely
John O'Toole
Clerks / Greffiers: William Short (pro tem.), Sylwia Przedziecki

Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs / Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques

Chair / Président: Pat Hoy
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laura Albanese
Laura Albanese, Wayne Arthurs
Toby Barrett, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Pat Hoy, Norm Miller
Glen R Murray, Charles Sousa
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

Standing Committee on General Government / Comité permanent des affaires gouvernementales

Chair / Président: David Orazietti
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Helena Jaczek
Bob Chiarelli, Steve Clark
Helena Jaczek, Kuldip Kular
Dave Levac, Rosario Marchese
Bill Mauro, David Orazietti
Joyce Savoline
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité permanent des organismes gouvernementaux

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Laura Albanese, Michael A. Brown
Donna H. Cansfield, M. Aileen Carroll
Howard Hampton, Ernie Hardeman
Lisa MacLeod, Leeanna Pendergast
Jim Wilson
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de la justice

Chair / Président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Leeanna Pendergast
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Ted Chudleigh
Mike Colle, Christine Elliott
Peter Kormos, Reza Moridi
Leeanna Pendergast, Lou Rinaldi
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité permanent de l'Assemblée législative

Chair / Président: Bas Balkissoon
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Yasir Naqvi
Bas Balkissoon, Bob Delaney
Joe Dickson, Sylvia Jones
Amrit Mangat, Norm Miller
Yasir Naqvi, Michael Prue
Mario Sergio
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent des comptes publics

Chair / Président: Norman W. Sterling
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Peter Shurman
M. Aileen Carroll, France Gélinas
Jerry J. Ouellette, David Ramsay
Liz Sandals, Peter Shurman
Norman W. Sterling, Maria Van Bommel
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé

Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Paul Miller
David Caplan, Kim Craitor
Jeff Leal, Gerry Martiniuk
Paul Miller, Bill Murdoch
Michael Prue, Lou Rinaldi
Tony Ruprecht
Clerks / Greffiers: Trevor Day (pro tem.), Sylwia Przedziecki

Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de la politique sociale

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vic Dhillon
Vic Dhillon, Cheri DiNovo
Rick Johnson, Sylvia Jones
Jean-Marc Lalonde, Ted McMeekin
Shafiq Qadri, Khalil Ramal
Elizabeth Witmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions / Comité spécial de la santé mentale et des dépendances

Chair / Président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott
Bas Balkissoon, Christine Elliott
Kevin Daniel Flynn, France Gélinas
Helena Jaczek, Sylvia Jones
Jeff Leal, Liz Sandals
Maria Van Bommel
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

Unparliamentary language

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters)..... 1086

Visitors

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters)..... 1086

Legislative pages

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters)..... 1086

Notice of dissatisfaction

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters)..... 1086

Notice of dissatisfaction

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters)..... 1086

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mr. Reza Moridi..... 1086

Mme France Gélinas 1086

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

Police

Mr. Garfield Dunlop 1086

John Paul the Great Family Centre

Mr. Mario Sergio..... 1086

Olivia Ross

Mr. Norm Miller 1087

Municipal planning

Mr. Michael Prue 1087

Glenn Kiff and Linda Wayne

Mr. Khalil Ramal 1087

Pharmacists

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer..... 1087

Baha'i community

Mr. Reza Moridi..... 1088

Polish constitution anniversary

Mr. Tony Ruprecht..... 1088

Earth Day

Mr. Ted McMeekin 1088

Visitors

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters)..... 1088

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES / RAPPORTS DES COMITÉS

Standing Committee on Estimates

Mr. Garfield Dunlop 1089

Report deemed received..... 1089

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS / DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI

**Lowering Energy Costs for Northern Ontarians Act,
2010, Bill 44, Mr. Duncan / Loi de 2010 sur la
réduction des coûts d'énergie pour les Ontariens
du Nord, projet de loi 44, M. Duncan**

First reading agreed to..... 1089

**Labour Relations Amendment Act (Replacement
Workers), 2010, Bill 45, Mme Gélinas / Loi de 2010
modifiant la Loi sur les relations de travail
(travailleurs suppléants), projet de loi 45,
Mme Gélinas**

First reading agreed to..... 1089

Mme France Gélinas 1089

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES / DÉCLARATIONS MINISTÉRIELLES ET RÉPONSES

Northern energy credit

Hon. Dwight Duncan..... 1089

Fire rangers

Hon. Linda Jeffrey 1090

Northern energy credit

Mr. Norm Miller..... 1091

Fire rangers

Mr. Garfield Dunlop..... 1091

Fire rangers

Mr. Gilles Bisson 1091

Northern energy credit

Mr. Gilles Bisson 1092

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Presentation of petitions

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters)..... 1092

Taxation

Mr. Norm Miller..... 1092

Firearms control

Mr. Tony Ruprecht..... 1093

Ontario pharmacists

Mr. John O'Toole..... 1093

Replacement workers

Mme France Gélinas 1093

Ontario pharmacists

Mr. Joe Dickson 1093

Ontario pharmacists

Mr. Steve Clark 1093

Replacement workers

Mme France Gélinas 1094

Identity theft

Mr. Tony Ruprecht..... 1094

Ontario pharmacists

Mr. Jim Wilson 1094

Diagnostic services

Mme France G  linas 1094

Ontario pharmacists

Mr. John O'Toole..... 1095

Taxation

Mr. Steve Clark 1095

Taxation

Mr. John O'Toole..... 1095

**PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS /
AFFAIRES D'INT  R  T PUBLIC
  MANANT DES D  PUT  S**

Healthy living / Saines habitudes de vie

Mr. Shafiq Qadri 1095

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer 1097

Mr. Kuldip Kular..... 1098

Mr. John O'Toole..... 1099

Mr. Khalil Ramal 1099

Mme France G  linas 1100

Mr. Ted McMeekin 1101

Mr. Shafiq Qadri 1102

British Home Child Day Act, 2010, Bill 12,

**Mr. Brownell / Loi de 2010 sur le Jour des petits
immigr  s britanniques, projet de loi 12,**

M. Brownell

Mr. Jim Brownell 1102

Mr. Steve Clark 1105

Mr. Gilles Bisson 1106

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield 1107

Mme France G  linas 1108

Hon. Eric Hoskins 1108

Mr. Jim Brownell 1109

**Mining Amendment Act (Resources Processed in
Ontario), 2010, Bill 36, Mr. Bisson / Loi de 2010**

**modifiant la Loi sur les mines (ressources
transform  es en Ontario), projet de loi 36,**

M. Bisson

Mr. Gilles Bisson 1110

Mrs. Liz Sandals 1112

Ms. Andrea Horwath..... 1112

Mr. Khalil Ramal 1113

Mr. Ernie Hardeman..... 1114

Mr. Paul Miller..... 1115

Mr. John O'Toole..... 1116

Mme France G  linas 1117

Mr. Gilles Bisson 1117

Healthy living

Motion agreed to 1117

British Home Child Day Act, 2010, Bill 12,

**Mr. Brownell / Loi de 2010 sur le Jour des petits
immigr  s britanniques, projet de loi 12,**

M. Brownell

Second reading agreed to 1117

**Mining Amendment Act (Resources Processed in
Ontario), 2010, Bill 36, Mr. Bisson / Loi de 2010**

**modifiant la Loi sur les mines (ressources
transform  es en Ontario), projet de loi 36,**

M. Bisson

Second reading negated..... 1118

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR**Election Statute Law Amendment Act, 2010, Bill**

**231, Mr. Bentley / Loi de 2010 modifiant des lois en
ce qui concerne les   lections, projet de loi 231,**

M. Bentley

Mr. Michael Prue 1118

Mr. John O'Toole..... 1126

Mr. Peter Kormos..... 1127

Mr. Khalil Ramal 1127

Mr. Ernie Hardeman..... 1127

Mr. Michael Prue 1128

Third reading vote deferred..... 1128

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Thursday 29 April 2010 / Jeudi 29 avril 2010

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Post-secondary Education Statute Law Amendment Act, 2010, Bill 43, Mr. Milloy / Loi de 2010 modifiant des lois en ce qui concerne l'enseignement postsecondaire, projet de loi 43, M. Milloy

Hon. Gerry Phillips	1065
Mr. Ted McMeekin	1065
Mr. Garfield Dunlop	1068
Mr. Rosario Marchese	1068
Mr. Khalil Ramal	1068
Mr. John O'Toole	1068
Mr. Ted McMeekin	1069
Mr. John O'Toole	1069
Ms. Cheri DiNovo	1072
Mr. Ted McMeekin	1072
Mr. Ernie Hardeman	1073
Mr. John O'Toole	1073
Mr. Rosario Marchese	1073
Second reading debate deemed adjourned	1075

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman	1075
Mr. Gilles Bisson	1075
Mr. Pat Hoy	1075
Mr. Garfield Dunlop	1075
Mr. Peter Tabuns	1075
Hon. Peter Fonseca	1075
Mr. Frank Klees	1075
Mr. Peter Kormos	1075
Mr. Gilles Bisson	1075
The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters)	1075

Environmental Commissioner

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters)	1075
---------------------------------------	------

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Tourism

Mr. Ted Arnott	1075
Hon. Michael Chan	1075
Hon. Dwight Duncan	1076

Tourism

Mr. Ted Arnott	1076
----------------------	------

Hon. Michael Chan	1076
Hon. John Wilkinson	1076

Taxation

Ms. Andrea Horwath	1077
Hon. Dalton McGuinty	1077

Mining industry

Ms. Andrea Horwath	1078
Hon. Dalton McGuinty	1078

Curriculum

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer	1078
Hon. Leona Dombrowsky	1079

Mining industry

Mr. Gilles Bisson	1079
Hon. Michael Gravelle	1079

Community health centres

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast	1080
Hon. Deborah Matthews	1080

Children's services

Mr. Frank Klees	1080
Hon. Laurel C. Broten	1080

Curriculum

Mme France Gélinas	1081
Hon. Leona Dombrowsky	1081

Taxation

Mr. Lou Rinaldi	1081
Hon. John Wilkinson	1081

Tobacco control

Mr. Toby Barrett	1082
Hon. John Wilkinson	1082

Public transit

Ms. Andrea Horwath	1083
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	1083

Workplace safety

Mr. Khalil Ramal	1083
Hon. Peter Fonseca	1083

Doctor shortage

Mr. John Yakabuski	1084
Hon. Deborah Matthews	1084

Labour relations

Mme France Gélinas	1084
Hon. Peter Fonseca	1084

Tourism

Mr. David Oraziatti	1085
Hon. Michael Chan	1085

Continued on inside back cover

CA30N
X1
-D23

Government
Publications



No. 25

N° 25

ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Second Session, 39th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 39^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 3 May 2010

Lundi 3 mai 2010

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

<http://www.ontla.on.ca/>

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7410 or 325-3708.

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7410 ou le 325-3708.

Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services
Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



Service du Journal des débats et d'interprétation
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400; télécopieur, 416-325-7430
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 3 May 2010

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 3 mai 2010

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the nondenominational prayer.

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Michael Chan: Today is a special day. It marks the second annual Tourism Day at Queen's Park. Joining us in the members' gallery are Bill Allen, president of the Tourism Industry Association of Ontario; Cheryl Sutton, Ontario Northland; Susan Cudahy, Waterloo Regional Tourism Marketing Corporation; Heather Ford, Green Acres Inn; Don Obonsawin, Direction Ontario; Beth Potter, Camping In Ontario; Emily Harper-Hawkins, Tourism Industry Association of Ontario; John Winston, Tourism London; Tim West, Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs; Tanya Southwick, Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs; Terry Mundell, Greater Toronto Hotel Association; Troy Young, Attractions Ontario; Phil Casey, Attractions Ontario; and Gary Masters, Festivals and Events Ontario.

WEARING OF RIBBONS

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'd like to ask for unanimous consent to wear a green ribbon in recognition of children's mental health awareness.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

MEMBERS' ANNIVERSARIES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to take this opportunity to congratulate two members of this House who as of yesterday, May, 2, 1985, had been members of provincial Parliament for 25 years. Congratulations to the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane, David Ramsay, and to the member from York Centre, Monte Kwinter, on 25 years of service to this chamber.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We have with us today, seated in the Speaker's gallery, a group of interns from the National Assembly of Quebec, who are visiting the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. They are: Laurie Comtois, Maxime Fortine, Laurence Fouquette-L'Ang-

lais, Pierre Lessard Blais and Martine Sirois. Welcome to Queen's Park today.

We have with us in the Speaker's gallery today a very special delegation from the Republic of Poland, led by his Excellency Bogdan Borusewicz, the Speaker of the Senate of the Republic of Poland. The delegation is accompanied today by the Ambassador of the Republic of Poland to Canada, His Excellency Zenon Kosiniak-Kamysz. Please join me in warmly welcoming all of our guests to Queen's Park today.

I just would point out to the members that this isn't the complete delegation. Many of the delegation were lost in the tragedy that took place in Poland. I would like to take this opportunity, if you're available today, to invite all members of the Legislature to join me in a memorial and a wreath-laying service that has been organized by the embassy of the Republic of Poland to honour those who tragically lost their lives on April 10 of this year. The ceremony will take place today at 2 p.m. at the Toronto Katyn Memorial. Please contact Parliamentary Protocol and Public Relations for information.

Mr. Speaker, once again, on behalf of this assembly, our condolences to the people of Poland.

Mr. Peter Kormos: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Of course the government has adopted the protocol or maintained the protocol of advising us of ministers away. I see that some are merely going to be late. We've got almost 40% of the cabinet not here. Perhaps we could delay the commencement of question period until the ministers who are going to be late in fact do arrive so that we could have a complete and thorough interrogation of ministers, and hold the government accountable. A 40% absence is a pretty dramatic number. Perhaps it's only 37%—

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: There we are. A brief adjournment might be helpful.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Are you seeking unanimous consent?

Mr. Peter Kormos: Of course, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I heard a no.

ORAL QUESTIONS

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Acting Premier. Last week the McGuinty Liberals had six or seven

or eight different positions on the new sex education curriculum that would start classes as early as with six-year-olds trying to tie their shoes. We would see the minister say one thing, and then the Premier saying something entirely different two hours later. Quite frankly, it looked more like a circus than a government.

That bungling continued this weekend when their HST tax grab hit consumers two months early. I ask you, was it incompetence, or were they desperately trying to sneak in a tax grab while Ontario families were unprepared?

1040

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think the Leader of the Opposition knows full well that what this government is doing is creating an environment in Ontario where our economy can grow. That's what we are doing. The restructuring of the tax system is one part of that open Ontario.

We are focusing on bringing jobs to Ontario, whether you look at the Green Energy Act or the restructuring of the tax system that actually will support manufacturing, will bring jobs to Ontario and will help us to continue to grow out of this economic downturn.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Well, the only growth crop in the province of Ontario is more taxes, fees and hydro hikes on Ontario families.

Minister, this week alone, on May 1, you launched a sneak attack with your HST, so that some poor, unlucky Ontario family paid Dalton McGuinty's HST tax grab for the first time. At the same time, you increased hydro rates in our province. Combined with fees and their sneaky green tax, it will hit Ontario families by \$350 more per year. They've handed out sweetheart severance deals to HST tax collectors who won't lose a day on the job.

I ask the Acting Premier: Why is it that Ontario families always pay the price for McGuinty government incompetence?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know my colleague in revenue will want to speak on the next supplementary on the HST, but I want to just frame this conversation. The frame is that we are operating in what we want to be as open an Ontario as possible—so, building a competitive tax system, building a clean energy industry, building a clean water industry; building a strong workforce. Our full-day learning program is a fundamental underpinning of that. If we don't make those changes, if we don't open Ontario and support our manufacturing, support our students and support our families, then we will fail. We are opening Ontario, and that's what these changes are about.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: This McGuinty government has been anything but open: a sneaky HST tax grab this weekend; sneaky hydro fee increases that, in total, will result in \$350 out of the pockets of average Ontario families in one year alone; and then buried on the Internet somewhere, these out-of-the-mainstream sex ed changes that would start sex ed classes with six-year-olds—government on the run, trying to bury these issues from Ontario families who they know will fully reject them.

So, a back-door energy tax going to general revenue, 350 bucks more a year from hydro rates, a health tax funding US health brokers to help you get into an American hospital, an HST that snuck in two months early—Minister, my goodness, what do you have planned next?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Every one of the initiatives the Leader of the Opposition has raised are initiatives that have been talked about. The Minister of Revenue has been going around this province talking about the HST for what seems like years now. There has been a robust discussion about the Green Energy Act and our incentives for green technology and the development of green energy in this province. Our changes to curriculum are open to the community. There has been consultation.

Every single one of those initiatives, whether it's a piece of legislation which has gone to public hearings or whether it's a policy change that has been talked about around the province, has been transparent to the public. That is the process of building an open Ontario. The policies of building an open Ontario are the stuff of that discussion.

TAXATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Acting Premier: I think the minister knows full well that parents knew nothing about your changes to the sex ed curriculum that would begin sex ed classes with six-year-olds, who are barely able to spell. And consumers knew nothing about your HST sneak attack this weekend, which forced some poor, unlucky Ontario family to pay your HST two months early. I think they're trying to address this bungled implementation of their HST tax grab. They sent out a senior revenue official to try to explain what they're doing.

So I ask the minister: Can you explain why loud laughter erupted when the tax man you sent to Brockville to speak to businesses said, in the last slide, "I'm going to tell you why the HST is such a good thing"?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Minister of Revenue.

Hon. John Wilkinson: Because it's a very good thing that we have 591,000 more jobs coming to the province of Ontario, because of \$47 billion more investment coming to the province of Ontario, because we have taken the bold step, the radical step, of working closely with the federal government to make the business climate in this province the most competitive in North America. That is our goal because we want to compete for and win those jobs.

There are parties that have voted against lowering personal income tax for people. There is a party over there that voted against lowering corporate taxes and small business taxes. They voted against eliminating the capital tax. They voted against eliminating the small business surtax. What they voted for was the status quo. On this side of the House, we know that we have to make a change so that there are more jobs here in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Minister of Revenue: Just like we saw a political circus across the floor when it came to your changes in the sex ed curriculum, similarly, across Ontario, we're seeing a circus erupt when it comes to your bungled HST tax grab. Let me give you another quote from your revenue official. We're calling him the most honest official in the McGuinty government. The revenue official you sent to Brockville is quoted as admitting the hush money you are sending out will "arrive magically in the mail" just before the next election.

I ask the minister, what makes you think you can use Ontario families' own money to try to bribe them in your HST implementation?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I ask the honourable member to withdraw that comment, please.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I thank the people of the Ministry of Revenue for the great job that they're doing, collecting some \$100 million a day to pay for the hospitals and the schools and all of the things that we value as public servants and the public whose services we provide.

I say to the members opposite, history will record that when we entered into the largest tax reform in over 40 years in this province, you voted against it. You need to be very clear with people—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just ask the members to come to order, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. Minister?

Hon. John Wilkinson: On this side of the House, we are permanently cutting income taxes so we now have the lowest personal income tax rate of any province in Canada on the first \$37,000 worth of income. You voted against the fact that we're providing the HST rebate for those people in this province who have the least. People will remember that, but they'll particularly remember that there was one government that decided to take action to make sure that there are 600,000 more jobs in this province. People with good-paying jobs paying their taxes and contributing: That is the most important thing that we can do on this side of the House to make sure that, after the great recession, we have a great recovery.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Ontario families and the Ontario PC Party know where this is all coming from. Dalton McGuinty wanted to ram through his greedy HST tax grab to spend on his Liberal friends like the Courtyard Group, among others.

But don't take my word for it. McGuinty's most honest revenue official also admits that you rammed this HST legislation through. The revenue official says, "Generally, it takes us five years to decide which envelopes

we're going to buy, and they rushed this through in one year."

I can see the minister's face, and I ask him, please do not take any repercussions on this person at revenue because he's the most honest official that we have seen to date in the McGuinty government.

I ask the minister: Why should Ontario families have faith in this government when your—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister?
1050

Hon. John Wilkinson: I say to the members opposite that it's duly noted by the business community that on July 1 we'll be eliminating 7,000 pages of regulation in regard to the PST, and you voted to keep them. Your advice was, "Oh, my God, we'd better hang on to the status quo."

The good people of Ontario will one day have the opportunity to look about this—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister?

Hon. John Wilkinson: As we are cutting the burden on small business, there is a party that purported to represent them that said, "Whatever you do, don't change anything. God, don't make our business community more competitive." We listened to them, and that's exactly what we're doing.

It is important that this province recover from the recession that started south of here and that we compete for and win the jobs that our children and our grandchildren need. That's the most important thing we can do.

We will continue to focus, under our Open Ontario plan, on ensuring that there are jobs for people today, for tomorrow—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Acting Premier. Ontario needs to see increased accountability and transparency in our health care system. The McGuinty government had the opportunity to make that happen today.

My question is a simple one: Why isn't the government extending Ombudsman oversight to Ontario's hospitals?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I am in complete agreement that accountability is a vitally important part of how we will strengthen our health care system as we go forward. Later today, I will be introducing legislation in this House that, I think, takes us an important step forward when it comes to improving accountability for quality in our health care system.

Our health care system is so very precious to us. We need to take steps today to ensure that our health care

system is going to be there for us and, more importantly, for our kids and our grandkids.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: If the government were truly interested in real oversight and transparency to protect patients, there are a number of steps that they could take. They could make hospitals accountable under the Freedom-of-Information act. They could set some real limits on sky-high executive compensation. They could grant the Ombudsman real oversight in our hospital system. Why have they rejected all of these options?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The health care system that we have today is—we're at a crossroads, I would say.

We have spent the last six and a half years of our time in government really strengthening the foundation of our health care system. We have enormously improved access to health care. Over 900,000 more patients have access to family health care than did when we were elected just six and a half years ago. We've been able to drive down wait times for important procedures like cataract surgery, hip replacement, cancer surgery and so on.

Because we have really focused on rebuilding access to our health care system, it is now time to turn our attention to enhancing quality and, yes, accountability for quality in our health care system.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplement-ary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The minister likes to talk about the crossroads that we're at, yet the government continues to take tiny little baby steps in terms of progress.

Patients want to see real protection of their health dollars. Today we watched a press conference hosted by a CEO who takes home more than \$800,000 a year while nurses across Ontario are losing their jobs.

The government could have announced a plan today for real accountability, real oversight and real transparency in Ontario's hospitals. Why did you not do it?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Today is, I think, a pretty important day in our health care system in Ontario because we will be introducing legislation this afternoon that really strengthens accountability for quality.

At the announcement of that this morning, I was joined by members of the University Health Network quality improvement committee. It is an interdisciplinary group of people who drive the change in that hospital that is so essential to our health care system.

Today we will be broadening the requirements of hospital boards to be accountable for quality indicators and quality improvement. It's important to note that we have extended the powers of the Auditor General to look at hospitals, to oversee hospitals and ensure that we're getting the best possible value for money in our health care system.

NURSE PRACTITIONERS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Again to the Acting Premier: While the government thinks of new ways to describe

health care cuts in this province, effective ways to control health care costs and protect patients are falling behind. Eleven nurse-practitioner-led clinics have been announced between February 2009 and today. Why have none of them opened?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm very happy to have the opportunity to talk about a new innovation in Ontario: the nurse-practitioner-led clinic. As the member opposite would know, I'm sure, the member from Nickel Belt has talked about the NP-led clinic in Sudbury that really has led the way and has shown us how it can work. Nurse practitioners can offer excellent primary health care. All nurse-practitioner-led clinics are affiliated with a family doctor so that there is a continuity of care.

We are excited about the opportunity to have more nurse-practitioner-led clinics across the province. I know that the one in Belle River is up and running. This is a new innovation, and it does take time to get everything in place so they will be open and working to their maximum capacity.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'm sure the minister knows that in Lively, just outside Sudbury, there's a clinic that is literally sitting empty. It's built, it's ready to go, but it is sitting empty because there's no money to operate it.

If the government is concerned about proper use of our health care dollars, does it make sense to build clinics and then leave them empty?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Of course, we are anxious to get the nurse-practitioner-led clinics operational as quickly as possible, but we think it's important that they do the foundational work that is important before they open their doors. So while I cannot speak directly to that one particular satellite, what I can tell you is that when I made the announcement several months ago of the next wave of nurse-practitioner-led clinics, it was a very exciting and happy day. We will be able to improve access to quality of care; we will be able to provide care that has a slightly different nuance to it. I truly believe in the value of nurse-practitioner-led clinics. It is an Ontario innovation, and I'm very excited about the future for them.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplement-ary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, this minister's announcements don't care for patients. Patients are waiting for innovative health solutions that ensure the front-line care is there when they need it. Instead, they see cuts to front-line services and new clinics sitting empty due to lack of funding. When will the government put the needs of patients first?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I have to say that I think the member opposite is not talking to patients in this province and is not talking to health care providers. Our health care system is significantly stronger than it was when we took office six and a half years ago. We have more services. We've got 900,000 more patients attached to primary health care. We've got 10,000 more nurses

working today than six and a half years ago. We're seeing better outcomes. We know there is more to do, and we are determined to do the very important work to strengthen our health care system.

Part of that work is getting our drug system reformed. I would welcome the support of the member of the third party as we proceed on strengthening our drug system—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. John Yakubuski: As a member of Polish descent, I know this is a national holiday in Poland. It appears half of the Liberal cabinet is taking the day off as well.

My question is to the Minister of Energy. Will the McGuinty Liberals send Ontario families transitional funding to help them cope with the \$350 a year more you have added to their hydro bills in rate hikes, secret taxes and new fees?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I appreciate the question from the member opposite. If he read our budget, he would know that there are provisions within that budget that indeed move forward with a tax credit in the amount of \$455 million that will flow this year at tax time: a property and energy tax credit that will, subsequent to the end of this year, flow three times a year to lower- and middle-income Ontarians to help offset what certainly are rising energy costs.

1100

Why are energy costs rising? They're rising because we've had to invest in infrastructure over the next six years because your government failed to make the necessary decisions to build an infrastructure energy system in this province. We've got a lot of catching up to do because of the failure of your government to make those tough decisions, but we are determined to ensure —

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakubuski: The McGuinty Liberals have opened up multiple fronts in their attack on family budgets. They are attacking the energy budget with \$350 a year more in rate hikes and taxes on power. They've attacked Ontario families by making them pay more for car insurance, tuition fees, property taxes, plastic bags, tires, electronics, the health tax and, now, there's your greedy HST tax grab.

When you add up all of Dalton McGuinty's new taxes and fees, there's nothing left of the cheques you're sending out before the next election. In fact, families will be in the hole. What made you launch your attack on Ontario families?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The member's all over the map with his questions today, but that's fine. When you were in power, you failed to recognize the importance of investing in a stable electricity system for this province. When you were in power, coal generation went up 127% during your years in power; we've brought it down by 70%.

We're investing, and energy costs are going up as a result. We've had to invest in our energy infrastructure. We've had to build up energy infrastructure in this province, and we're doing that in a way that's responsible, that's environmentally responsible and that takes into consideration the health of future generations.

There is a cost to doing that. But the cost of not doing that is an unstable energy system that is polluting our air and impacting the health of our kids. That's what you stand for. That's what they stand for; that's not what we stand for.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Minister of the Environment. Today's report by the Ontario Environmental Commissioner indicates that transportation is the largest and fastest-growing source of energy use in Ontario. More and more gasoline and diesel are being used for personal and freight transport. This is polluting our air, hastening climate change and making people sick. Does the McGuinty government have a plan and targets for reducing gasoline and diesel use in Ontario?

Hon. John Gerretsen: First of all, I would like to thank the Environmental Commissioner for coming up with an excellent report. We work very closely within our ministry with the Environmental Commissioner, and we look forward to doing that in the next six months while he's still on the job, since he has been extended for at least six months. Of course, he's going through the process together with everybody else who has applied for that position as well.

We have done an awful lot over the last six years with respect to our whole climate change agenda, not only with respect to transit in which we've invested some \$9 billion. We're in the process of implementing a cap-and-trade system. We are looking at fuel efficiency standards in this province as well. We've done a lot of work. A lot of work needs to be done, but we are absolutely determined to meet our goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 6% by—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: That certainly is an answer that confirms what the Environmental Commissioner said in his report: "Ontario does not have energy reduction targets for the conservation of transportation fuels." If we had them, this minister would have been reciting them ad infinitum.

Vehicle use is increasing faster than population growth. In his report, the Environmental Commissioner urges the government to "expand ... [the] modal shift to public transit." Why is the government going flat out against the recommendations of its own Environmental Commissioner by cutting Transit City funding and reducing access to affordable transit?

Hon. John Gerretsen: First of all, we did not cut transit. It was the previous government that invested absolutely nothing in transit. Secondly, let me just quote

to you what the Environmental Commissioner had to say in a question that he was asked this morning. He said, "Generally we're pretty good. We're one of the better provinces in that regard ... on conservation there are other programs in other provinces but I still say that Ontario's still at the front." That's what he said today.

We all recognize on this side of the House that a lot of work has been done over the last six years. A lot more work needs to be done, but we're on the right track. We want to meet those targets and, with everyone's help in this House, we will be able to do so.

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mrs. Liz Sandals: My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. As you know, this week is Children's Mental Health Week in Ontario. One in five children between the ages of 13 and 17 faces mental health challenges, which can have devastating effects on children and their families. I know from my work on safe schools that left untreated, mental health issues can become very serious and can lead to bullying, dropping out of school, and tragically, even to suicide.

I know that the government is committed to connecting Ontarians of all ages with needed mental health programs. It's a difficult task that this government has been working to achieve since our election in 2003. But I still hear from families about their ongoing challenges in accessing services. So as we begin Children's Mental Health Week, can the minister tell the House about the government's efforts to support—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I want to thank the member for her advocacy on this issue and her commitment to her community on this issue in particular.

She's quite right that a number of steps have been taken since we came to office in 2003, and that is because, under two previous governments, there were no increases to children's mental health from 1992 until 2003. That's why since 2004, we've invested an additional \$64 million to support and expand children's mental health services. We've created the Provincial Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health to promote research and to improve quality. We've expanded and funded the Ontario child and youth telepsychiatry program. Very recently, we've started our work with parents for children's mental health: to develop better ways for parents to navigate the system and help their children and to support parents in the journey that they follow along with their children.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: These investments and improvements to service are very important; Trellis Mental Health and Developmental Services in Guelph was thrilled to get access to telepsychiatry for children and youth. But what matters most to families is that these programs are working and helping their children. We've heard frequently at

the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions that there is a stigma that keeps people from talking about mental health in the way that they speak about other health issues. Part of that stigma comes from the fear that mental health cannot be properly treated.

Can the minister tell the House about some of the successful programs that we do have for children and youth with mental health issues?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I do want to thank the select committee for the important work that they're doing on behalf of the entire Legislature and the province of Ontario.

We do know that this week in particular, raising awareness with respect to children's mental health is critically important, and that is because there are many programs that can help kids turn their lives around. I have seen those programs firsthand. I was at the York Centre, where children and youth who could not function in a mainstream classroom were learning. I saw those kids stand up and give speeches and talk about how important and impactful the service and the help that they were getting was to build confidence and turn their lives around.

At Niagara Child and Youth Services, children are getting the services that they need to have the best practices for new service delivery models and ensuring that they're getting the help that they need.

Simon Davidson at the centre for excellence is driving innovation and more, in fact, of—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

TAXATION

Mr. Norm Miller: My question is for the Acting Premier. In 59 days, Dalton McGuinty will broaden his attack on family budgets by making us pay 8% more for hydro, heat for our homes next winter, gas for our cars and a whole range of things. The constituents of the member for Nipissing get it. One of them writes, "With people having even less cash to spend, they will buy less and the economy will tank even further."

The cheques you're sending out will be long gone by the time Ontario families have to pay for energy, car insurance, tuition, tires, electronics and property and health taxes. My question is, what made you stop caring about family budgets?

1110

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Minister of Revenue.

Hon. John Wilkinson: I'm delighted to talk about the permanent tax credits and the permanent nature of our tax reform. Yes, indeed, courtesy of the federal government, there will be transitional money that will be coming to Ontario families and businesses starting in June of this year, as long as they file their income taxes, but there are so many permanent tax cuts that are coming.

First of all, we lowered personal income tax for 93% of people on January 1. Second, we're bringing in the new HST rebate, which will be paid on top of the GST

rebate for families with low incomes. We are doubling the property tax credit for seniors by an additional \$250. More property owners, people who own a home or are also renters, will receive the enhanced property tax credit as well. All of those measures, I say to the member, supported by Tony Clement, are permanent.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Norm Miller: What the minister forgets to say is that the first thing this government did upon being elected was raise corporate taxes, raise small business taxes and bring in the health tax.

John Bell of Hamilton township in Northumberland is looking at what the Liberals' greedy taxes mean for him today, and worries about the 8% more that Dalton McGuinty will collect on hydro on top of hiking hydro rates by 10%. He says:

"Still not upset about this pending fleecing of our electrical pockets? Then you must either be extremely young, extremely well off financially, or you just don't care."

The member for Northumberland won't ask John Bell's question, so I will: Are you attacking family budgets because you are out of touch or because you just don't care?

Hon. John Wilkinson: Both the member for Nipissing and the member for Northumberland—Quinte West have been doing a wonderful job making sure that their constituents understand the facts.

I say to the good people in those ridings and all ridings, particularly the ridings that are covered by the members opposite, that there is a resource at ontario.ca/taxchange where there is a comprehensive list of those things that will be changing and the vast majority of things that will not be changing.

I am particularly proud of my colleagues because they understand that what their constituents have said clearly is, "We need more people working in this province." That's not going to happen unless our private sector is even more competitive in an increasingly competitive global economy. So we have taken action to ensure that in this province we will lead North America in being the most competitive when it comes to taxes. It's that job creation—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

POLICE

Mr. Peter Kormos: Mark Bonokoski's Sunday Sun column concludes that police concerns about—

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Who are you talking to?

Mr. Peter Kormos: This is, of course, to the Acting Premier. This column concludes that police concerns about post-traumatic stress disorder are being swept under the rug. Why won't this government—

Interruption.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I'll wait, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will please come to order.

I remind the members again about technological devices in this chamber. Perhaps they should all be best banned.

Member?

Mr. Peter Kormos: The Speaker's wisdom about cell-phones and BlackBerrys is unassailable.

Again—it's a serious matter; this is to the Acting Premier. Bonokoski's Sunday column compels the conclusion that police concerns about post-traumatic stress disorder are being swept under the rug. Why won't the government respond to the needs of police officers suffering from PTSD?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think we can absolutely agree that police officers have very difficult jobs, with high levels of stress, working under hazardous conditions. That's why, in fact, WSIB has provided support to police officers suffering from PTSD. I think the other reality is that we know a lot more about what PTSD is today than we did years ago.

It's an ongoing improvement of services: case managers trained in police officer post-traumatic stress disorder claims; a new fast-track appeals process; and appeals resolutions officers to deal with any police sector appeals. We are working with police services. We know this is a very serious issue and we know there's more that needs to be done.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Kormos: The five-part series by the Sun told story after story after story by a police officer in this province who is being failed, who continues to suffer from PTSD. The Bonokoski column reports that retired Detective Inspector Bruce Kruger has referred the matter to the Ombudsman.

This government has taken great pride in its compliance with Mr. Marin's recommendations in the past. Will the government join in encouraging Mr. Marin to launch a full-scale investigation into this serious matter so that there can be standards and guidelines that can be complied with?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: First of all, I'm not going to comment on a specific case, obviously, and I'm not going to instruct any officials on how they should behave. What you need to know is that we take this very seriously. The WSIB, the Police Association of Ontario, the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police and police services boards are looking at what more can be done, how we can prevent post-traumatic stress disorder from happening in the first place.

The WSIB provides benefits to more than 500 workplace victims of PTSD each year. In fact, since 1998, the WSIB has reduced the decision time on PTSD claims from 192 days to 41 days. So there is progress.

We know more about what needs to be done. The relevant groups are working to prevent—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

TAXATION

Mr. David Zimmer: My question is for the Minister of Revenue. The Jeff Allan radio talk show is a talk show in Kitchener, Ontario. Last week, the member for Cambridge was on the show. A call came in from a questioner asking the member for Cambridge a question. He refused to answer the question. Here is the question from the caller:

"I have a small business, a coffee business, here in Cambridge. And I have a concern related to the opposition to the HST.

"My accountants and the rest are pointing out very clearly that I'm far better off with the HST. I will get all of my inputs back, my bookkeeping is a lot easier, it's one set of books. I'm going to be able to, it looks like, hire probably two or more part-time employees"—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I was delighted to be on Jeff Allan's show just this morning, because there seemed to be an issue. I appreciate the fact that the Cambridge Chamber of Commerce has confirmed that the smartest thing we can do to get our economy growing, particularly in the KW-Cambridge area, is to reform our tax system. It's something that the Ontario Chamber of Commerce has been calling for for some five years.

I say to my friend opposite, it is important to understand that this is something that the business community, which I remember you used to try to represent, has said is the best thing that we can do to create jobs. It's the private sector that we need to be going back and creating jobs, and the single most important thing we can do is to make sure that we are not just competitive in Ontario, not just in North America, but around the world; that our products, our goods and services are—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

1120

Mr. David Zimmer: Tim Hudak, the leader of the Conservative Party, has said this about HST: "Now, I know that some business leaders support the harmonized sales tax, and to be clear, I believe that there's little sense in allowing two separate governments to apply"—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. Please continue.

Mr. David Zimmer:—"two sets of taxes and policies and collect two separate groups of sales tax."

What did Mike Harris say about the HST? "We always said there should be one sales tax ... we would like to work with the federal government to make that happen."

What did John Tory say? "I think it's something that many people in business and elsewhere say is going to enhance the competitiveness of Ontario and create jobs" in Ontario.

Minister, can you help explain to the Tories—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. John Wilkinson: They used to be in this House talking about lower taxes, and when we lowered taxes they voted against it. They used to talk about small business being the number one generator of new jobs in Ontario, and when we moved to improve their business climate, when we moved to eliminate the small business surtax, they voted against it.

There was a time when that party stood for the private sector but they've walked away from that, and they're very proud about the fact that they do not believe that we should improve the competitive position of the business community in this province.

We know that that is the source of the new jobs that our children and our grandchildren need in the 21st century.

PEDIATRIC FORENSIC
PATHOLOGY INQUIRY

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: My question is to the Attorney General. Last week, I asked about the status of the legal review and compensation committee you formed after the release of Justice Goudge's report. I was told that you're acting "expeditiously," but it has been a year and a half of silence. I wasn't told when victims will have answers.

Brenda Waudby was convicted of killing her daughter based on false evidence provided by Dr. Charles Smith. It took over two years for her child's babysitter to confess.

Minister, 12 wrongful convictions were identified as a result of Dr. Charles Smith's reports. Again, when will you have answers for Ms. Waudby and victims like her?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Very, very important questions. There are two tracks that I want to speak to. First of all, with respect to those criminal cases—potential wrongful convictions—the crown has been moving very fast, very quickly, to expedite these to get into the court system. In fact, the crown has done everything possible to get these heard by the court as quickly as possible to make sure that any wrongful convictions are righted. That's one track.

Secondly, Justice Goudge recognized in the report that there were a lot of individuals who might have potential claims but they were all maybe at different stages, maybe different facts. So what he asked us to do was to see if we could come up with a compensation approach, which I will speak to in a few moments in the supplementary question, and we've been working to do that.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: A year and a half isn't very fast, Minister. Brenda Waudby's child was murdered, and for many years she was falsely accused of being responsible. Her nightmare continued for nine whole years. Recently, Ontario's Criminal Injuries Compensation Board denied her compensation, so she turned to you. You should have had an answer.

Mrs. Waudby's lawyer wrote that it seems "absolutely nothing has changed for those most directly affected by the significant systemic failures" that Goudge identified.

Minister, I can think of nothing worse than losing a child and then being falsely accused of her murder. Why is Ms. Waudby still waiting?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Nor can I, nor can any of us. We cannot do anything to change those horrible circumstances, so we do whatever we can to try to get as close as possible.

The criminal system, as I said, is moving very quickly to right the wrongs. Just remember that there are different parties representing different ones of the accused. On the compensation side, Justice Goudge asked us to see if we could come up with a standardized approach so that those individuals wouldn't have to go into the traditional, often lengthy civil court process. I've been getting that legal advice. It is ongoing. I should be in a position to speak to that very soon. We have been working very hard on this to make sure that individuals who have been wronged—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Acting Premier. For people in northern Ontario, the HST on home utilities, including heat and hydro, and gasoline for the cars is going to make life a heck of a lot less affordable. After all, winters are colder there, prices are higher, and people can't just jump on a subway to get to work.

The finance minister will be in Thunder Bay later today to sell his northern energy credit. Before the finance minister does his dog-and-pony show up north, will the Acting Premier tell the Thunder Bay families exactly how much the McGuinty government's HST will cost them on utilities and gasoline alone?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Minister of Revenue.

Hon. John Wilkinson: I thank the member for the question. It is important that we recognize that Minister Duncan is in Thunder Bay today to share with people the latest initiative coming out of the 2010 budget.

In 2009, we were able to pass in this House a piece of legislation that will ensure that there are going to be more jobs. I can't think of anything more important in northern Ontario today than opportunities for more jobs in the north.

In his recent budget, he also talked about a new revised energy and property tax credit, particularly about the new parts of the credit that have to do with families in northern Ontario.

I want to thank the Minister of Finance for understanding the tremendous advocacy of the northern caucus mates that we have here on the government side who went to him and explained how important it was that we're able to—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Last summer, I was in Thunder Bay, where I met with Milton and Anne Marion. The Marions are seniors who pay as much as \$600 a

month for furnace oil. They'll be paying an extra \$50 a month when the McGuinty government's HST kicks in.

Will the Acting Premier tell the Thunder Bay families how much the HST is going to cost them, and admit that the energy credit won't even come close to covering the costs on home heating alone?

Hon. John Wilkinson: It's important that we look at all of the benefits that will accrue to the couple that you talk about.

First of all, we cut their income taxes on January 1. Second, we've improved the property tax credit for seniors. Third, we've enhanced the property tax credit for more Ontarians, and in our latest budget we've improved that even more, as well as provided a new credit in regard to energy for those who are up north.

We've also made sure that the people who are the most vulnerable, who today receive the GST rebate from the federal government, will continue to receive that as well as the new HST rebate.

Finally, we secured a historic agreement with the federal government that sees some \$4.3 billion transferred. We're taking that money and we are putting it right in the wallets of consumers.

We know that this is not easy, but 591,000 more people working in the province of Ontario is worth it.

TOURISM

Mr. Bruce Crozier: My question is for the Minister of Tourism and Culture.

Minister, the Tourism Industry Association of Ontario is at Queen's Park today. TIAO, as it's known, is the voice and advocate of Ontario's tourism industry. Today they are here to discuss the future of their industry and to see how the industry can work with government to ensure that it remains competitive and sustainable.

However, a strong industry is also one that can efficiently promote Ontario, one that can create excitement and interest in Ontario.

Minister, what is the government doing to support the tourism industry to generate interest in Ontario so that we can attract local, national and international visitors?

Hon. Michael Chan: I want to thank the honourable member from Essex for the question. I appreciate the opportunity to talk about tourism in Ontario.

Ontario festivals and events play an important role in bringing excitement to the families travelling through Ontario. Promoting festivals and events generates interest and keeps tourism competitive here.

This is why we invest so much in our festivals and events. Since 2007 our government has invested almost \$37 million, through Celebrate Ontario, to support over 500 festivals and events.

This investment helps enhance celebrations, increases visitors and brings jobs and tourism dollars to local communities.

1130

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Bruce Crozier: Minister, investments in the hundreds of festivals and events across the province are

undoubtedly important. However, in order to generate greater interest in Ontario, marketing needs to be more efficient and better coordinated at all levels. Marketing should not be a one-off effort. In order to generate greater interest in Ontario and to ensure that it is a destination of choice, our efforts in marketing need to be maximized.

Minister, what is the government doing to create an environment where the industry can generate greater interest in Ontario through enhanced efficiency and coordination in marketing?

Hon. Michael Chan: I agree with the member from Essex: Marketing needs to be more efficient and better coordinated. This is why, with industry input and many, many consultations, we are moving forward with the implementation of the 13 new tourism regions. These regions will better coordinate marketing, attract jobs and stimulate the economy.

Since 2003, we have invested \$450 million in the Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership Corp. There is also great efficiency here. The results speak for themselves. Third quarter numbers indicate that for every dollar spent, there has been a \$17.50 return on investment. We are really on the right track, and we want to move forward in that direction.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My question is for the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure. Last month, you announced 184 energy projects that will proceed without municipal approval. How many more energy projects do you expect to site this fiscal year?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The feed-in tariff program, for the most part, when it comes to the large projects, has been allocated. The 184 are the bulk that is approved as of right now. In terms of approved, I mean that they've been given contracts. They still have to go through an approval process.

I thank the member for raising that question, because I want to ask her whether she feels comfortable with her own policies in this respect. Just last week here in this Legislature, we had an opportunity—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order.

Mr. John Yakabuski: We're trying to help him out, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): You can't be helpful from the seat that are you're in, honourable member from Renfrew.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. Stop the clock.

Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Just last week, this Legislature had an opportunity to choose between their policy of relying on dirty coal and our policy of moving towards renewables such as wind energy, water and solar. I want to thank my colleagues here in this Legislature for choosing wisely. We have to move forward into the future with

cleaner and healthier sources of energy. Your side would—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Minister, not one of those 184 projects received municipal approval. None was necessary, and that's what I would like to talk about and get your answer on now.

Municipalities across Ontario are planning jurisdictions for landfills, for industrial areas and for residential sitings, yet you feel they are incapable of being part of the municipal planning process for renewable projects. Why do you not think the municipalities are up to the job, Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The member knows full well that municipalities must be engaged in these decisions. They must be consulted, and communities must be consulted. We've said that in this Legislature—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The members will come to order. The honourable member from Dufferin—Caledon knows the rules: If she's not satisfied with the answer, she can file a late show.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Oxford. Order. The members from Leeds—Grenville, Simcoe—Grey.

Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Not only does the other side want to bring us back in time, they want to bring us back in time even further behind the Harris government. Let me quote one of my predecessors as Minister of Energy. Mr. John Baird said "the government wants to move quickly in getting environmentally friendly projects for wind, solar and more hydroelectric power on stream. 'Conservation has got to be part of the equation and alternative fuels has got to be part of the equation.... We don't want to study the issue, we want to move forward on it.'" That was your Minister of Energy during the Harris days. You're not only moving back to their period of time, you want to move even further back—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Paul Miller: I guess my question is to the Acting Premier, because the minister—okay. Foreign ownership of Ontario industries has not always ended up being good for the workers and communities of our province. These foreign owners often end up in lockout positions or strikes due to the situations. Then our natural resources, our raw materials and our jobs leave Ontario to be processed elsewhere.

When will this government take action to ensure that our natural resources, our raw materials and our jobs stay in Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It is absolutely a high priority, our top priority in Ontario, to make sure that we

have jobs in this province. Pretty much all that we've been doing, and the focus that we've put on Open Ontario, is about making sure that we have jobs. Whether we talk about tax restructuring or whether we talk about support for the auto industry, what we've been doing over the last number of months is making sure that we've got those supports in place. In February, jobs were up by another 7,000 in Ontario. Since last May, 91,700 net new jobs were created. Manufacturing is up over 32,000 net new jobs. I think that's the most important thing we can do: make sure that jobs are here, that innovation happens in Ontario and that we have people working in this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: The workers at Stelco were laid off. Raw materials and our work were taken to the States. Steelworkers at Nanticoke were locked out, and their work was taken to the States. I suspect this is part of US Steel's plan to drive Ontario's steel working families to near economic ruin and then force them into inadequate contracts—the classic divide and conquer, just like Vale Inco and their scab labour.

Now we have Max Aicher buying up a steel plant in Hamilton, a deal that still needs government approval. When will this government push the federal government to ensure that their approval contains requirements that our natural resources, our raw materials and our jobs stay in Hamilton?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I said, job number one for us is to make sure that we have more jobs in Ontario, and Hamilton is part of Ontario, so we want to make sure that we have the jobs here. What we know is that closing our borders to the world won't work. It will cost Ontarians jobs, not preserve them. There are no other Canadian provinces that close their borders to ore. We're proud, for example, that 100% of nickel mined in Ontario is smelted here, and 85% is refined in Ontario. It is our responsibility as the government, and it is our hope that members of the opposition will work with us, to make sure that we do everything we can to create jobs in Ontario and support industry. That's what we're doing. That's what we're going to continue to do, I hope working with the opposition.

BUILDING CODE

Mr. Phil McNeely: My question today is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. The Building Code Act, 1992, is the legislative framework governing the construction, renovation and change of use of buildings. I understand that the building code itself is a regulation of the act and that it is the responsibility of municipalities to enforce Ontario's building code. That being said, it is the government of Ontario which sets forth what is the actual act and code.

I've been asked by constituents in my riding what role energy and water conservation play in the building code. I know that conservation is a priority for the government, as seen in the Clean Water Act, the Lake Simcoe Protection Act and the Green Energy and Green Economy Act.

What I'm looking for today is information that I can bring back to my environmentally concerned constituents on what the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing has done, through the building code, to require energy and water efficiency.

Can the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing please share with this House how the building code is making Ontario greener?

1140

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'm pleased to be able to share with the member that, in fact, the Green Energy and Green Economy Act, 2009, brought significant conservation-based changes to the Building Code Act. These include clarifying that energy and water conservation are purposes of the building code, requiring regular five-year reviews of the code's energy conservation provisions and mandate the creation of a Building Code Energy Advisory Council. That council was established to provide the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing with strategic advice on the future direction for the building code energy conservation requirements.

The building code also supports the protection of drinking water supplies and environmental integrity through regulating septic systems.

We recently posted proposed regulations on the Environmental Bill of Rights registry that require re-inspection of such systems and certain vulnerable areas.

USE OF ELECTRONIC DEVICES IN HOUSE

Mr. Peter Kormos: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: This issue around cellphones and, indeed, BlackBerrys I think they're called, has been raised numerous times. I know the Speaker from time to time has said, "Well, it's for the House to decide." The House could decide, I suppose, many things. Perhaps we could have portable televisions at our desks. We could be watching—

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: See, we could be watching Kathy and Regis or whoever at 9 in the morning.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Speaker, however, as many times as you've admonished people not to bring cellphones in here, people continue to do it, especially during question period, which is probably the single most important—at least the single most focused or intense period of the day.

It's called Parliament because—well, we all know the derivation: "to speak." I don't mind being heckled because at least it demonstrates that somebody's listening to what I'm saying. Think about it. I don't mind other people heckling other members and interrupting in that way because at least they're listening to what that member has to say, and that seems to me to be an incredibly important thing at the very least during question period.

I appreciate that on a Wednesday afternoon at 5:30 things can get pretty tedious in here and people may be inclined to read a newspaper or a paperback novel. But,

Speaker, we need you to exercise your authority, your control, your jurisdiction to control what happens in this House. You will, for instance, call upon people who use unparliamentary language to withdraw. The fact is that now the Sergeant-at-Arms purports to seize a telephone that rings audibly and loudly during the course of a rather serious question and then the phone is returned.

May I submit to you, Speaker, at the very least that if you're not inclined—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order.

Mr. Peter Kormos: —if you're not inclined to impose a complete ban on these devices, then at the very least you identify the offending party so that there is a record of people who hold this chamber in such low regard that they would allow a telephone of theirs to ring while they're in here. Obviously they don't think this is particularly important if they're ready to receive phone calls.

I submit to you, Speaker, you should at the very least identify the member. I also submit that it would be incumbent upon that member to apologize to the chamber for violating a direction of the Speaker, otherwise your directions have zero impact, and the failure of members to apologize and the failure of the Speaker to identify them, in effect implying upon that apology, renders the Speaker somewhat impotent and mocks the Speaker's authority. You're a Speaker in name only, and if people want to mock your authority, then you don't serve the valuable role that we've called upon you by electing you to serve.

I say it's a relatively simple proposition. I plead with you. This is a hortatory address to the Speaker. I plead with you to do something meaningful in response to these breaches of your guidance.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I thank the honourable member from Welland. As the members are aware, the use of electronic devices is prohibited. We have tolerated, collectively, the use of BlackBerrys being in silent mode, but even BlackBerrys in silent mode, I have warned you, are a health and safety issue for our good friends the interpreters sitting over in the corner. I frankly don't get it. I can survive an hour and 15 minutes without looking at my Blackberry and not answering the cellphone. I agree with the honourable member from Welland: I don't know why members can't. We can go back to the old-fashioned way: If there's something of urgent importance that your staff needs to send to you, send a little note in. That's why the pages are here: to provide that service to us. I agree with the point that it is disrupting. Here, you had an honourable member today asking a very serious question, an important question of public interest. In the middle of it, a cellphone goes off. That is not respectful to the member who was asking the question; quite honestly, it's not respectful to anyone in this House.

I will take the point under advisement. I don't want to be described as the honourable member described me. With respect, I appreciate it, but speaking of respect, I think we need to be respectful of one another. You know

what? For an hour of every day, when it's the most important time, when it is showtime for you as members, it is showtime for the Speaker and it is showtime for everyone, show some respect for one another and leave the cellphone outside or leave it in your office. Thanks.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would like to take this opportunity to welcome, in the west members' gallery, Richard Nancarrow, Karen Nancarrow, Anneke Van Heuven, Molly Van Heuven, Sophie Nancarrow, Carleigh Chambers, Jemma Waddell and Hanna Cordoso. Welcome to Queen's Park.

DEFERRED VOTES

ELECTION STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LES ÉLECTIONS

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 231, An Act to amend the Election Act and the Election Finances Act / Projet de loi 231, Loi modifiant la Loi électorale et la Loi sur le financement des élections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1147 to 1152.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): All those in favour will rise one at a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Aggelonitis, Sophia	Duguid, Brad	Miller, Norm
Albanese, Laura	Dunlop, Garfield	Moridi, Reza
Arnott, Ted	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Naqvi, Yasir
Arthurs, Wayne	Gerretsen, John	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Bailey, Robert	Gravelle, Michael	Phillips, Gerry
Balkissoon, Bas	Hardeman, Ernie	Ramsay, David
Barrett, Toby	Hoskins, Eric	Ruprecht, Tony
Bentley, Christopher	Hudak, Tim	Sandals, Liz
Best, Margaret	Jeffrey, Linda	Sergio, Mario
Bradley, James J.	Johnson, Rick	Smith, Monique
Broten, Laurel C.	Jones, Sylvia	Sousa, Charles
Brown, Michael A.	Kwinter, Monte	Sterling, Norman W.
Carroll, Aileen	Leal, Jeff	Takhar, Harinder S.
Chan, Michael	Levac, Dave	Van Bommel, Maria
Chudleigh, Ted	Martiniuk, Gerry	Wilkinson, John
Clark, Steve	Matthews, Deborah	Wilson, Jim
Colle, Mike	McMeekin, Ted	Witmer, Elizabeth
Crozier, Bruce	McNeely, Phil	Yakabuski, John
Dombrowsky, Leona	Meilleur, Madeleine	Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Those opposed?

Nays

Bisson, Gilles	Kormos, Peter	Prue, Michael
Gélinas, France	Marchese, Rosario	
Hampton, Howard	Miller, Paul	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 57; the nays are 7.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): There being no further business, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1155 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm delighted to introduce my daughter, Allison Dawes, from Mr. Miller's riding, the fine riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I would like to welcome some people who are joining us as I speak. They're my guests in the House today: Dr. Mark Macleod and Robyn Cassidy from the Ontario Medical Association; Kevin Smith, chair of the Ontario Hospital Association; and Ben Chan from the Ontario Health Quality Council.

Also, I would like to take the opportunity to recognize some of the Ministry of Health staff who have made today's introduction of legislation possible: Tai Huynh, Sylvia Moustacalis, Paul Kaufman, Vanessa Ciolfitto, Julia Gallo, Barry Monaghan, Fannie Dimitriadis, Jennifer Baker and Stirling Lafrance. These are all very hard-working members of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. I'm very, very proud of the work they have done to make today's introduction possible.

Mr. Norm Miller: It's my pleasure to introduce, in the members' west gallery, Dawn and Ed Novak, who are accompanied by Ron Jacques and Joy McCormack. Dawn and Ed are here today to present a constructive analysis of the murder of their daughter.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I want to acknowledge those who have joined us in the galleries today from Parents for Children's Mental Health and Children's Mental Health Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just want to take this opportunity. Many of you know George, the CTV cameraman. Some of you are aware that we've had a pair of red-tailed hawks that have been nesting here at Queen's Park for a number of years. We have two new residents of Queen's Park as of today. George just informed me that there are two baby chicks in the nest out front right now. So keep an eye out for the red-tailed hawks.

By the way, have a look at the garden out front. There are Ontario white trilliums now growing at Queen's Park.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

POLISH COMMUNITY

Mr. John Yakabuski: I would be remiss on this day of commemoration of Poland's constitution not to

mention the recent tragic plane crash that took the life of the President, his wife and so many other government officials, and the vacuum it left in Poland's leadership.

To Poles and their descendants, May 3 is a national holiday, for it bestows upon them a priceless heritage of humanitarianism, tolerance and freedom, conceived at a time when most of Europe lived under the existence of unconditional power and tyranny. The tyranny deemed the Polish Constitution too dangerous, and Poland lost its independence; its territories annexed by Austria, Russia and Prussia. In terms of a national life, Poland lost the entire 19th century, being reborn in 1918.

In 1868, the ancestors of my father, Paul Yakabuski, emigrated to Canada from the Kashub region of Poland. In 1963, he became the first person of Polish descent to be elected to the Ontario Legislature.

My riding is home to Wilno, Canada's first Polish settlement, where each year the Wilno Heritage Society gathers to celebrate our Kashub Polish heritage on the first Saturday of May. I was again able to join them in their celebration this year.

In spite of the recent tragedy, this will be a day of celebration for Polish people everywhere, as they mark the 219th anniversary of their constitution. We join them in that celebration.

HUNTINGTON'S DISEASE

Mrs. Liz Sandals: May is Huntington Disease Awareness Month, and I believe we have unanimous consent to wear the Huntington Society of Canada lapel pin to support this campaign and to spread awareness of this devastating disease.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I believe the pins are in the lobbies.

Huntington's disease is an inherited brain disorder that affects both mind and body. Huntington's disease affects thousands of Canadians across our country, leading to profound cognitive and emotional impairment and eventually incapacitation and death. The disease remains incurable, and there are no known effective treatments.

May is the official month when the society educates the general population about Huntington's disease. Many special functions, raising funds, happen in the spring, along with the launch of their Amaryllis Campaign. The amaryllis, which appears on the pin, is the signature flower for the Huntington Society of Canada. The society's volunteers have been selling amaryllis plants since 1985 and have raised over \$1 million to fight against this terrible affliction.

Today, I encourage my colleagues in the House to join me in supporting the Huntington Society of Canada.

VICTIMS OF CRIME

Mr. Norm Miller: I wish to introduce Dawn and Ed Novak, who are here today to present their brief, A Constructive Analysis of the Murder of Natalie Novak. They're in the west members' gallery.

May 15 will forever be a day that Mr. and Mrs. Novak remember with great sadness. On that day in 2006, their daughter Natalie was stabbed to death by her former boyfriend, Arsei Hindessa.

The Novaks' brief puts this very personal act of violence into a context of what they see as a series of missteps and deficiencies in the way we deal with victims and perpetrators of domestic violence. They reveal a pattern of Mr. Hindessa's arrest and release, his failure to appear at court dates and meetings with his probation officer and psychiatrist, and his failure to comply with no-contact orders.

The culmination of these events was when Mr. Hindessa was arrested for again breaching a no-contact order regarding Natalie. After this arrest, he was released into the Toronto bail program. Less than a month later, he brutally murdered Natalie in her Toronto apartment.

None of us can bring Natalie back to her parents, but Dawn and Ed Novak ask us to take something positive from their loss. They ask us all, as legislators, to learn from Natalie's experience.

I thank Dawn and Ed Novak for travelling to the Legislature today to present their brief. I also commend them for having the courage to share their story of Natalie's life and death so candidly with us.

I would ask a page to come over, so that I can have their brief delivered to the leaders of all parties, the critics, the Attorney General and other relevant ministers.

1310

COMEDY FESTIVAL

Mr. Gilles Bisson: On Tuesday evening last week, I had an opportunity to join a number of residents in the city of Timmins who went to a very special occasion which was sponsored by the Canadian Mental Health Association, and that was a comedy fest, where people suffering from mental illness went through a program of learning how to develop stand-up comic routines and had the opportunity to deliver those routines to a pretty packed house at TH&VS last Tuesday.

I've got to say it was one of the most delightful events I've been to in a long time, not only because my only sister was there and I thought she was the funniest of the presenters, but quite frankly I thought it was rather interesting as far as an approach of using humour to look at the lighter side of life in order to try to deal with some of the issues caused by schizophrenia and other mental health diseases.

To those who participated along with Louise Bisson, my sister, in both Timmins and Timiskaming as part of this event, I say congratulations. In fact, it was probably the funniest comedy show I've been to in a long time, because I learned what I've always suspected to be true: Humour can be extremely funny if you don't use vulgarities in that humour. All of the comics did an excellent job and we were all well entertained. We hope this becomes an annual event in northern Ontario.

PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: There have been many assertions from the opposition about how the Ontario government is letting patients down with our reforms to Ontario's drug system. Let me take this opportunity to set the record straight.

This government recognizes and appreciates the valuable contributions that Ontario's pharmacists make to patient care. In fact, patient care is what these reforms are all about. Our plan is focused on providing patients with better access to lower-cost prescription drugs. It's unfortunate that big pharmacy chain owners are putting patients in the middle of a policy disagreement with the government.

We are building on our commitment to pharmacists through measures that will increase dispensing fees, representing about \$124 million, as well as new funding of \$100 million to compensate pharmacists for additional services they provide to patients. We're also proposing more than \$20 million in new funding to boost financial support for pharmacies in rural communities and under-served areas.

The opposition members who are against these reforms are on the side of the big pharmacy chain owners, who are only interested in increased profits.

This government will continue to fight to improve patient care in Ontario with these drug reforms.

SPORTS AWARDS

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Thank you for the opportunity to speak about an important event that happened in my riding on April 24. The 13th annual Whitby Sports Hall of Fame awards gala celebrated the achievements of four people from our town who have achieved excellence in sport: Samuel Dempster, Joe Jones, Andrea Lawes and Gary Roberts.

Samuel Dempster started his baseball coaching career as a coach in Whitby and Oshawa and was instrumental in the creation of the LOSSA high school baseball league in Durham region. He went on to become a major league baseball coaching envoy, and is currently an associate Canadian scout for the Milwaukee Brewers.

Joe Jones achieved great success in the sport of cycling. Canadian Cyclist magazine cites Joe's 10th-place finish in the prestigious British Milk Race, a gruelling 1,500-mile race, as a significant achievement, and Joe was the first Canadian ever to be invited to compete in this event.

Andrea Lawes was recognized for her long and distinguished curling career. She played in 25 various provincial championships, winning 10 of them. Internationally, Andrea represented Canada at the 1990 world curling championships in Sweden.

Gary Roberts needs no introduction. His long and illustrious hockey career started in Whitby, where he played minor hockey under coach Benny LaHaye. He went on to play for 21 seasons with the National Hockey

League, starting with the Calgary Flames, on to the Carolina Hurricanes, the Toronto Maple Leafs, the Pittsburgh Penguins and the Florida Panthers. His NHL career closed with the Tampa Bay Lightning in the 2008-09 season.

Congratulations to all of the award recipients. We're all very proud of you.

DISASTER RELIEF

Mr. Jim Brownell: As we all know, a series of earthquakes devastated the country of Haiti on January 12, 2010. About three million people have been affected by this disaster. Approximately 200,000 people lost their lives, not to mention the damage to their infrastructure.

It has been heartwarming to see the outpouring of help and support in Canada, in this province and from around the world. Although the earthquake which devastated Haiti took place in mid-January, the need to aid survivors remains as strong as ever.

I want to recognize and thank Bob Lauzon, the organizer of the Rockin' for Haiti benefit in my riding of Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry. This event took place this past Saturday in Cornwall, with all proceeds donated directly to the Sisters of the Holy Cross to help earthquake victims in Haiti.

It does not end there, as students from schools in my riding—East Front Public School, Central Public School, Gladstone Public School, Viscount Alexander Public School, Eamer's Corners Public School and Kinsmen/Vincent Massey School—raised an amazing \$6,700, which they donated to the Canadian Red Cross for the relief effort.

There are many more stories like this, in my riding, of people lending a helping hand to those in need. I want to thank all organizations and people who have been so compassionate during this difficult time in history for the people of Haiti. More support is needed, and I challenge organizations and businesses in my riding and across this province to join in the efforts in helping the people of Haiti through fundraising efforts such as Rockin' for Haiti.

ROYAL CANADIAN NAVY

Mr. Jeff Leal: Canada's navy was officially established on May 4, 1910. Since then, around a quarter of a million men and women have served in the navy and the country has sent nearly a thousand ships to sea. Sailors have come from every province and territory, and ships have ranged from the size of in-harbour vessels the length of two or three cars, to aircraft carriers longer than 17 school buses.

When the First World War broke out, the Royal Canadian Navy had two warships and fewer than 350 sailors. By the end of the Second World War, it had grown into the world's third-largest navy, with roughly 100,000 men and women and 434 commissioned vessels.

Throughout both world wars, Canada played a critical role in the success of many strategic objectives. One in particular was the navy's contribution to the Battle of the Atlantic. The Battle of the Atlantic was the longest continuous military campaign of the Second World War, starting at the beginning of the war in 1939 and ending with the defeat of Nazi Germany in 1945.

By July 1940, all ocean-going shipping had to be re-routed around the north of Ireland and through the Irish Sea. Even this route was seriously threatened, and Canadian ships in British waters strove to fend off submarine attacks while rescuing survivors of torpedoed merchant ships.

In the spring of 1941, the number of attacks and shipping losses escalated. In June alone, over 500,000 tons of shipping was lost to U-boats. Canadians showed their resilience by developing new methods of locating and destroying the German submarines. By maintaining the Atlantic lifeline through convoy protection, the Canadian Navy played a vital role in this battle.

On May 28, 1945, at one minute past midday, all Canadian ships at sea turned on their running lights to signal the end of the battle of the Atlantic. This battle is commemorated every year on the first Sunday of May wherever the Canadian Navy is present.

EDUCATION WEEK

Mr. Rick Johnson: Today marks the start of Education Week in Ontario. Our theme for this year is Preparing Our Students for Future Success. This theme reflects the great results we already see in Ontario's publicly funded education system, such as rising graduation rates, and the great results we expect to see from the implementation of full-day learning this fall.

More students than ever before are staying in school, graduating and finding the right career path. As a result, more students are gaining the skills they need to be successful and make a difference in our world. Our educators and school staff work with our students each day to enrich their lives and set them on a path to success.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the educators and staff in Ontario's schools and the school boards for their continued commitment and passion. It is our educators who truly are preparing our students for future success. Please join me in celebrating Education Week and expressing continued dedication to making Ontario's education system the best in the world and for the world.

REPORT, ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSIONER OF ONTARIO

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that I have laid upon the table a report from the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario entitled Rethinking Energy Conservation in Ontario: Annual Energy Conservation Progress Report—2009 (Volume One).

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE POLICY

Mr. David Zimmer: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Justice Policy and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 158, An Act to repeal and replace the statutes governing The Certified General Accountants Association of Ontario, the Certified Management Accountants of Ontario and The Institute of Chartered Accountants of Ontario / *Projet de loi 158, Loi visant à abroger et à remplacer les lois régissant l'Association des comptables généraux accrédités de l'Ontario, les Comptables en management accrédités de l'Ontario et l'Institut des comptables agréés de l'Ontario.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Shall the report be received and adopted? All those in favour?

Mr. Peter Kormos: On division.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On division.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

1320

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

EXCELLENT CARE FOR ALL ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR L'EXCELLENCE DES SOINS POUR TOUS

Ms. Matthews moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 46, An Act respecting the care provided by health care organizations / *Projet de loi 46, Loi relative aux soins fournis par les organismes de soins de santé.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The minister for a short statement?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I will wait until ministerial statements.

VICTIMS OF CRIME AWARENESS WEEK ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LA SEMAINE DE SENSIBILISATION AUX VICTIMES D'ACTES CRIMINELS

Mr. Chudleigh moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 47, An Act to proclaim Victims of Crime Awareness Week / *Projet de loi 47, Loi proclamant la Semaine de sensibilisation aux victimes d'actes criminels.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Recognizing victims of crime each year reminds us that all victims deserve to be treated with dignity and respect. We keep in mind the impact crime can have on victims of families and on friends. We pay tribute to those who have been victims of crime and those who have lost as a result of crime. We acknowledge the work of those people in our province whose commitment helps support victims of crime.

CHILD AND YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LA SENSIBILISATION À LA SANTÉ MENTALE DES ENFANTS ET DES JEUNES

Ms. Horwath moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 48, An Act to proclaim Child and Youth Mental Health Day / *Projet de loi 48, Loi proclamant la Journée de la santé mentale des enfants et des jeunes.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: As per the explanatory note, the bill proclaims Friday, May 7, 2010 and the Friday of the first full week of May in each subsequent year as Child and Youth Mental Health Day.

MOTIONS

SIGN-LANGUAGE INTERPRETATION

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding sign-language interpreters for certain proceedings.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I move that during introduction of visitors, oral questions and members' statements on Wednesday, May 5, 2010, sign-language interpreters may be present on the floor of the chamber to interpret the proceedings to guests in the gallery

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

HEALTH CARE

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I had the opportunity of introducing some guests earlier, and three more have

come. I would like to take this opportunity to welcome Adalsteinn Brown, Susan Fitzpatrick and Sophia Ikura, also people who were instrumental in formulating this legislation.

I rise in this chamber today to speak to legislation that would, if passed, improve the quality and value of health care being delivered to Ontarians, and it will put the patient first. It is called the Excellent Care for All bill.

Earlier today, I met Robert Hawke. Robert is an actor who survived cancer. Through his experience, he learned how difficult it can be to navigate our health care system. He's developed a hilarious one-man play titled *Norm vs Cancer* about his experience. More importantly, he is the co-lead of the patient empowerment program at the University Health Network. Robert gets it. He understands how empowering patients and ensuring that they have a voice in the system matters, and giving patients a voice is exactly what we intend to do.

As my colleagues will know, our government committed in the recent throne speech to make Ontario health care providers and executives accountable for improving patient care; to ensure that, for more and more services, money follows the patient; and to have an independent expert advisory body that provides recommendations on clinical practice guidelines, based on the best available evidence, to ensure that future investments get results and improve patients' health. The legislation I'm introducing today, the Excellent Care for All Act, is intended to lay the groundwork for all of those things. I urge my colleagues to see the importance of supporting it.

The demands being placed on our health care system are virtually infinite, and as everyone here knows, government resources are not. Just 20 years ago, 32 cents of every dollar spent on provincial government programs were spent on health care. Today it's 46 cents, and in 12 years, it could be 70 cents if appropriate action is not taken. We simply can't let that happen, not if we value our universal single-payer system and not if we're committed to ensuring that that universal single-payer system is there for generations to come. So what do we do? And no, the answer is not to cut services, to increase wait times or to limit access to care for patients. Governments have tried that before, and we've seen the consequences. We have a different approach—a smarter, fairer approach.

The McGuinty government has focused the last six and a half years on rebuilding a system that was badly neglected by the previous government. The results have followed: lower wait times, more doctors and more access for all Ontarians. I stand here today knowing that we are at an important juncture when it comes to health care in this province. Thanks to this government's efforts to rebuild the foundation of our system, we now have a tremendous opportunity to refocus our priorities: to refocus on the patient.

By focusing on patients, we can make the overall experience for patients in the health care system that much better, and we get better value for money. For example, we know that there were roughly 140,000 cases of patients last year who were readmitted to hospital

within 30 days of their original discharge. That's far too many. It's bad for patients and it's costly. We all have to work together to change this. The McGuinty government will lead the way. The government's Open Ontario plan includes improving the quality and accountability in health care by ensuring that health care professionals work together in the best interests of the patient.

Here is what we are proposing doing: Our proposed bill would ensure that the quality of the patient experience is measured in a standardized way and reported publicly. We would hold executives accountable for the quality of care delivered. We would listen to patients and ensure that quality committees in each health care organization use the results of patient surveys to create benchmarks for improving the standard of care. Also, patients would have a formal mechanism to have their questions and concerns addressed through a patient relations process.

It is really very simple. If we want a health care system that delivers the best possible care today and is able to do so in the future, we have to act now. What we have to do is focus health care leadership on the task of changing the culture so that quality care for patients is the most important job that every single person in the organization does.

If this legislation passes, the following changes would begin to take effect in our health care system: Health care organizations, beginning with hospitals, would have interdisciplinary quality committees that would report to the board on quality-related issues. Health care organizations, starting with hospitals, would have quality improvement plans which would be publicly posted, and executive compensation would be linked to the achievement of outcomes identified in those plans. Patients would have access to a patient relations process and regular reporting of patient surveys. The results of those surveys would be used to inform an annual quality improvement plan and would be taken into consideration when determining compensation for executives.

1330

We would also expand the mandate of the Ontario Health Quality Council to enable it to provide recommendations on clinical practice guidelines for services delivered by health care providers. They will also provide advice on the services we fund provincially to reflect the best available medical evidence.

Through associated policy changes, we would gradually reform how hospitals are funded to create greater transparency.

Our current funding model penalizes hospitals when their volumes increase. Global budgets deliver a set amount of money for a year, and any increase in the number of patients coming into the hospital is a cost or financial liability. The result is that hospitals may delay or deny care in order to balance their budgets.

Along with our increased expectations of accountability for quality, we're introducing a new funding plan for large hospitals that has built-in incentives to encourage the delivery of high-quality, evidenced-based care. In this model, the funding will follow patients to the

hospitals where they receive services, and hospitals will be compensated based on the services they provide.

I want to be very clear that we recognize the unique character of small and rural hospitals, and these funding changes will be focused on hospitals with large volumes.

The proposed bill is a reflection of this government's strong commitment to the future of health care in this province. Health care is too important for us to allow inefficiency, it is too important for us to allow a lack of transparency, and it is much, much too important for us not to ensure that every single dollar we put into the health care system is having the desired effect and benefiting patients.

If passed, this legislation would reward high-quality care and would create a more positive patient experience within the health care system. In the process of doing those critical things, it would ensure the sustainability of our publicly funded health care system that we all cherish.

I know my colleagues care as deeply about the future of health care in this province as I do. I'm asking them to support this bill and to support excellent care for all.

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH WEEK

SEMAINE DE LA SANTÉ MENTALE DES ENFANTS

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'm pleased to rise in the House today to acknowledge Children's Mental Health Week, which is marked the first full week of May each year. This important week is about increasing awareness of the signs of child and youth mental health problems, decreasing stigma, and understanding that help is available and that it works.

Les statistiques révèlent qu'en Ontario, un enfant et un jeune sur cinq a un problème de santé mentale. Cela représente environ 500 000 enfants. Les problèmes de santé mentale incluent aussi bien l'anxiété et la dépression que l'hyperactivité avec déficit de l'attention, les troubles alimentaires et la schizophrénie, pour n'en nommer que quelques-uns.

Aujourd'hui, j'encourage chacun à porter ce ruban vert pour promouvoir la sensibilisation à la santé mentale des enfants.

Statistics tell us that one in five Ontario children and youth has a mental health illness; that's about 500,000 kids. Illnesses range from anxiety and depression to attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, eating disorders, schizophrenia and more. Today, I encourage all of us to wear this green ribbon to promote awareness of children's mental health.

We all need to talk about this important issue in our families, in our communities and across the province. When a child has a mental health challenge, it can take an enormous toll on the entire family. A child suffers stigma, has trouble in school, and may be ostracized by friends and feel isolated. For the family, a child in crisis creates complete upheaval, and too often families feel there is nowhere to turn.

Étant moi-même parente, je peux seulement imaginer la difficulté et l'isolement que ressentent les parents que j'ai rencontrés et qui m'ont raconté leur histoire. Je tiens à dire à ces parents et à tous les parents de l'Ontario que notre gouvernement partage avec vous les aspirations que vous avez pour vos enfants.

As a parent myself, I can only imagine what a tough and lonely road it must be for the parents I have met and who have shared their life's journey with me. I want to say to those parents, and to all Ontario's parents, that this government shares the aspirations you have for your kids. We have dreams for your kids too, and that is why in 2004 we provided the first base funding increase in over a decade into children's mental health, and in 2007 we invested another \$24.5 million. We have also doubled the funding to the telepsychiatry program and expanded access in rural, remote and underserved communities. In 2004, our government established the Provincial Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health at CHEO in Ottawa. In 2008, we put in place the student support leadership initiative, which provides \$3 million per year to build partnerships between mental health agencies and school boards. And this year, we will fund the development of the navigator, a program where parents with lived experiences help parents to get the services and supports they need for their kids.

L'un des côtés à la fois les plus enrichissants et les plus déchirants de mon travail est d'entendre directement les témoignages des familles de l'Ontario, de comprendre leur vécu et de connaître l'impact positif et le pouvoir de transformation des programmes novateurs en santé mentale.

I am reminded of a visit I made to Niagara Child and Youth Services, where I saw first-hand the impact of art therapy. For kids who have undergone traumatic life experiences and are unable to verbalize their thoughts and feelings, art therapy allows them to express their views of themselves and the world around them. But perhaps most importantly, it allows them to heal. Through art therapy, I witnessed the progression of one girl's journey from self-hatred to self-worth through paintings of herself.

Although our government has undertaken some very important work, there is still much more to do. We take up the call of Children's Mental Health Ontario's latest graffiti campaign, and we will not write these kids off.

As Iris the dragon tells us in Gayle Grass's groundbreaking children's book depicting one child's struggles with mental illness and journey to healing, "Just keep believing in yourself and know that there are people around to help you. And when you grow up and see a falling star, catch it, shine it brightly, and throw it into the sky as high as you can."

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Responses?

HEALTH CARE

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I am pleased to make a few comments with respect to the new bill that was intro-

duced in the Legislature today by the Minister of Health, the so-called excellent health care for all bill.

Let me say at the outset that we in the PC Party are in full support of the concept of full transparency and accountability in health care. It's imperative that we ensure that best value is received for each precious health care dollar spent. It's also important to note that the Progressive Conservatives stand squarely behind the principle of universal access to an excellent, publicly funded health care system.

But I also think it's rather rich that the McGuinty Liberals are pointing a finger at health care executives and professionals with this legislation. In our view, the problem lies not with our excellent health care professionals, but with the McGuinty Liberals. They should be looking at their own practices and priorities. We have, and it's a pretty sorry record. I'd like to give a few examples.

Let's look, first of all, at their practice of raiding hospital budgets to pay the half-million-dollar salary of the former health deputy minister. That's hardly open and transparent, I would suggest.

What about the eHealth fiasco, in which \$1 billion was completely wasted, according to the Auditor General of Ontario, with no further progress made toward the development of electronic health records, which are absolutely vital to the best-quality health care for all Ontarians and also to achieve the kinds of efficiencies that we need to be achieving in order to make sure that each health care dollar is wisely spent?

As much as I look forward and support the idea of focusing on excellent health care for each and every patient in Ontario, I don't hold out too much hope that that's going to be attained under the McGuinty Liberals, given their past dismal record in this area.

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH WEEK

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I just met with the Parents for Children's Mental Health, and I'd like to use their words to respond to the minister's statement.

"As shown in multiple reports and studies, the devastating effects of having a child with mental health issues, the impact it has on the family and surrounding community has reached its breaking point. It is time for a call to action and time for all of us to come together in easing the pain and suffering for our children."

1340

Auditor General Jim McCarter in 2009 indicated that the estimated total economic cost attributed to mental illness in Ontario was \$22 billion per year. This includes things like health care, law enforcement, motor vehicle accidents, crime, and indirect costs resulting in loss productivity.

Again from the Parents for Children's Mental Health briefing that I just came out of: The recently released Ontario budget once again provided no increased funding for children and youth mental health services, meaning another year of no core funding increases, for three years

consistently. This lack of investment has caused immediate closures of services, staff layoffs, and realignment of many programs for children and youth mental health services across the province, further adding to the fragmentation of services available to the more than 656,000 currently suffering from mental health illnesses across the province.

The Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, of which I am a member, has also released its interim report based on the numerous consultations held with agencies, professionals, researchers and consumers across the province. Throughout the report, the fragmentation of services, silos, and difficulty navigating the system is referred to.

It is imperative that Ontario begin to actively address the crisis of child and youth mental health services in Ontario. Families, children, and youth across the province are in acute need of accessible services, resources, support and assistance. Again, from Parents for Children's Mental Health: I couldn't agree more.

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH WEEK

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'm responding to the Minister for Children and Youth Services for her statement earlier today. I have to say first and foremost that New Democrats commend Parents for Children's Mental Health and their partners for the attention that they draw to the unmet needs of Ontario's children and youth who have mental health issues here in the province. Of course, across Canada there is a drive to have a day designated as child and youth mental health awareness day in every province—and, of course, I just introduced a bill to hopefully have that happen here in Ontario. But I have to say, and I think we would all agree, that we need more than a day of awareness and recognition.

The minister, I would have to say, is disingenuous to suggest that the McGuinty government is responding properly to the crisis in children's mental health. How dare she say that help is available and that it works? Help is not available. That is why these parents are here. That is why awareness continues to have to be made about this issue.

This government has frozen funding for children's mental health for three years straight. That means that the help is not available because the services are not there for people. To avoid more service cuts and layoffs, Children's Mental Health Ontario recommends a regular 3% annual increase in the budgets. Families want much sharper government focus on filling the needs of children and youth and their families, and we agree with that.

Due to the government's shortfall, almost half of our community mental health agencies in Ontario had to cut programs during this year, eliminating a range of counselling and support services for approximately 1,000 children and youth. That means 1,000 children and youth for whom services are not available, and of course, therefore, it's not working.

More than half of these agencies—54%—anticipate further program cuts this year; two out of every three

agencies had to lay off staff; and one third of them had budget deficits as the needs outstripped the resources. The cuts meant less residential care for young people, fewer in-home services, less help for teens with both addiction and mental health challenges, and less help for families.

Is this the kind of Ontario that the McGuinty government wants—a province where children languish without services? Sadly, only one in four families who need mental health services for their children have access to those services.

I could go on and on, but I know that my colleague has something to say about the Minister of Health's statement, so I'll end with that.

HEALTH CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I will be responding to the Excellent Care for All bill. New Democrats are worried about the future of medicare, but we are especially concerned about the exponential growth in hospital executive salaries under the McGuinty government. This year's sunshine list revealed a new club, the \$700,000 club, which is filled with hospital presidents and CEOs whose salaries have continued to grow by 7% last year alone. No other working group got a 7% increase in 2009, but hospital CEOs did.

Since this government took office, hospital executive salaries have increased by 40%. How can it be that we have Premier McGuinty making \$208,000 a year and managing a budget of close to \$100 billion, and yet hospital CEOs make four times that amount to manage one one hundredth of that budget? It makes no sense.

We need the Minister of Health to stand up and send a clear message that this is not acceptable, and that those salaries have to be rolled back, but none of that is in the Excellent Care for All Act.

We're also very concerned about the failure to implement basic transparency and accountability. The minister talks about a new patient relations process. When a patient has a complaint with the hospital, they go through the hospital complaints process. Once this fails, they call the Ombudsman. But the Ombudsman can only say, "Sorry, I can't help you."

What people and patients really want is access to the Ombudsman. But, here again, this bill does not give the Ombudsman oversight of our hospitals. It's the same thing with freedom of access to information. If you want transparency, if you want accountability, why can you not have the hospitals under freedom of access to information?

We're also concerned that the interprofessional advisory committee will take second place to the long-established medical advisory committee. It will be interesting to see how the recommendations of those two groups play out and who will get the upper hand.

We have been told for months that this legislation could correct many long-standing problems in the hospital system. I'm afraid I may be disappointed. But I

do like very much that the Ontario Health Quality Council's role has been expanded. They do tremendously good work.

PETITIONS

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

Mrs. Julia Munro: My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ontario government is cutting front-line health care at pharmacies, which could mean higher prices, less service and even store closures for us;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Stop the cuts to front-line health care at our pharmacy now."

I am in agreement with this, and I will give this to page Sarah.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr. Paul Miller: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas all Ontarians living with life-threatening iron overload from regular blood transfusions have the right to the best available medical treatment, regardless of their financial means;

"Whereas the only publicly funded treatment for iron overload in Ontario, for patients with MDS and other rare anemias, is delivered through painful daily infusions lasting between eight to 12 hours, five to seven days a week, which many patients can't tolerate;

"Whereas an effective and well-tolerated oral once-daily treatment for iron overload, Exjade, is now available that addresses an unmet medical need for another treatment option, but Exjade isn't publicly funded in Ontario for patients with MDS and other rare anemias;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to act now to ensure that patients with MDS and other rare anemias in this province have access to Exjade. We urge the government of Ontario to provide funding for Exjade through the Ontario public drug programs for all patients who require this treatment option, without further delay."

I agree with this petition, and I'll sign my name to it.

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

Mr. Rick Johnson: I'd like to read a petition that was collected at a pharmacy in Minden, Ontario. I will read the whole text.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government is cutting front-line health care at pharmacies, which could mean higher prices, less service and even store closures for us;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Stop the cuts to front-line health care at our pharmacy now."

And in very tiny font:

"By signing this petition, you are authorizing the coalition of CACDS, OPA and IPO to use the personal information you have provided to us, particularly your name and email address, to send you additional information and updates about the Ontario government's proposed amendments to pharmacy and drug reform. If you do not wish to receive these emails, please put an 'X' in the box next to your email address."

I turn this petition in to page Michelle.

1350

SALE OF DOMESTIC WINES AND BEERS

Mr. Robert Bailey: This petition is to the Ontario Legislative Assembly and it's titled "Say Yes to Beer and Wine Sales in Convenience Stores."

"Whereas the province of Ontario restricts the sale of beer and wine to the LCBO, a few winery retail stores and the Beer Store, and the three large beer companies are owned by multinationals;

"Whereas other provinces (notably Quebec) have been selling beer and wine in local convenience stores for many years without any harm to the well-being of the public; and

"Whereas it is desirable to promote the sale of beer and wine in a convenient manner consistent with a contemporary society;

"Whereas it is essential to support local convenience stores for the survival of small businesses;

"Whereas it is obvious from the current market trends that the sales of wine and beer in convenience stores is not a question of 'if' but 'when';

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Liquor Control Act to permit the sale of beer and wine in local convenience stores to the public throughout the province and to do it now."

I'll send it down with Nicole.

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that reads as follows:

"Whereas a company's resumption of production with replacement workers during an illegal strike puts undue tensions and divisions on a community; and

"Whereas anti-replacement legislation in other provinces has reduced the length and divisiveness of labour disputes;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact legislation banning the use of replacement workers during a strike."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the Clerk with Ana.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Mike Colle: I've got a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario from the Friends of the Eglinton LRT.

"Whereas investing in public transit and infrastructure is important to Toronto and to Ontario to help reduce gridlock, improve air quality and create jobs;

"Whereas Toronto has the worst gridlock in the world, as noted in a 2010 study; and

"Whereas the Eglinton rapid transit line is a much-needed link that will travel along Eglinton Avenue, from Kennedy station" all the way "to Pearson airport ... connecting Durham region with Peel region...;

"Whereas the Eglinton rapid transit line would create 10,000 green jobs in construction, engineering and public transit;

"Whereas the Eglinton rapid transit line would be a boost for neighbourhood improvement, promoting local business and increasing property values for current retailers and homeowners;

"Whereas a rapid transit line has been supported" and promised to Eglinton Avenue "since 1975;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support the building of the Eglinton rapid transit line as soon as possible, and to say no to gridlock on Eglinton."

I support this petition and I affix my name to it.

SERVICE CENTRES

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition from the good folks from Leeds-Grenville. It reads:

"Whereas 401 service centres at Mallorytown, Ontario, were closed in September 2009 and 250 jobs were lost; and

"Whereas the community has identified the need for a staffed full-service tourist kiosk as part of the redevelopment of the Mallorytown service centres; and

"Whereas the completion date for reconstruction of these centres could be delayed past spring 2011; and

"Whereas the reeve and council of Front of Yonge township have passed a resolution giving the government approval of construction 24 hours a day, seven days a week to expedite the project;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Transportation accelerate reconstructions of the Mallorytown service centres based on the local council's wishes and commit to enhanced tourist service improvements at these sites."

I certainly agree with the petition, will affix my signature and send it with page Sarah.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr. Peter Kormos: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Education's accommodation review process, used by school boards to accommodate students, and which includes closing schools, is flawed, lacks transparency and accountability;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Immediately stop the closure of Crowland Central Public School and any disputed closures. Develop policies where school boards are more accountable and the ministry, school boards, municipalities and community members work together openly and transparently to deal with funding, schools and declining enrolment."

It's signed by Craig Hyatt, Nicole Jones, Mary McCutcheon, Margaret Taylor and hundreds of others, and I of course have signed it as well, and it has been certified. This is a certified petition that I present to you, sir.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Phil McNeely: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario from St. Matthew's high school. Sarah Conway, Lisa Cater and Lindsay Leonard signed it.

"Whereas the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, in its 2007 report, concluded that without dramatic reductions in human-induced carbon dioxide emissions, climate change may bring 'abrupt and irreversible effects on oceans, glaciers, land, coastlines and species;' and

"Whereas no one group, country or continent is responsible for climate change, but where all human beings are collectively responsible for solving the problem; and

"Whereas the production of greenhouse gases in Canada has increased by 27% over 1990 levels; and

"Whereas our elected leaders have a responsibility to report to the public on their actions with respect to halting climate change for the sake of accountability; and

"Whereas youth in particular have a special interest in this issue, being those that will inherit this earth, our only home;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario swiftly pass Bill 208"—now Bill 6—"An Act to increase awareness of climate change."

I will sign this petition and send it up with Michelle.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Ted Arnott: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it reads as follows:

"Whereas multiple industrial wind farm projects are being considered by the government of Ontario in the absence of independent, scientific studies on the long-term effects on the health of residents living near industrial wind farms;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the government of Ontario to put a moratorium on any

renewable energy approvals for the construction of industrial wind farms in the province of Ontario until such time as it can be demonstrated that all reasonable concerns regarding the long-term effects on the health of residents living near industrial wind farms have been fully studied and addressed."

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of Sudbury:

"Whereas the Ontario government" has made PET scanning "a publicly insured health service available to cancer and cardiac patients...; and

"Whereas" since October 2009, insured PET scans are "performed in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

"Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario, with the Sudbury Regional Hospital, its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make PET scans available through the Sudbury Regional Hospital, thereby serving and providing equitable access to the citizens of northeastern Ontario."

This is also a fully certified petition. I fully support it, will affix my signature to it, and send it to the Clerk with Caroline.

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

Mr. Jeff Leal: I have a petition today from folks in Windsor, Burlington and Toronto, and it is indeed certified.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberal caucus support public health care and protecting access to front-line care;

"Whereas Tim Hudak's Conservatives' policies would stop access to affordable prescription drugs being available to Ontario families and seniors;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To continue to pursue legislation that will put an end to this flawed system of professional allowances for generic drugs in order to reinvest the savings to the benefit of all Ontarians."

I agree with this petition and will affix my signature to it and give it to the page.

TAXATION

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas residents in Dufferin-Caledon do not want a provincial harmonized sales tax (HST) that will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

"Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for gasoline for their cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes and will be applied to house sales over \$400,000; and

"Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for meals under \$4, haircuts, funeral services, gym memberships, newspapers, and lawyer and accountant fees; and

"Whereas the blended sales tax grab will affect everyone in the province: seniors, students, families and low-income Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty Liberal government not increase taxes for Ontario consumers."

These petitions were collected over a period of three days during the home show, and I'm pleased to affix my name to it.

CHANGEMENT DE CLIMAT

M. Phil McNeely: J'ai une pétition à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario soumise par l'école Gisèle-Lalonde—Zoé Black, Karine Boudreau et Janik Bilodeau.

« Attendu que dans son rapport de 2007, le Groupe d'experts intergouvernemental sur l'évolution du climat des Nations Unies a conclu que, sans des réductions dramatiques au niveau des émissions de dioxyde de carbone imputables à des activités humaines, les changements climatiques pourraient avoir des "effets soudains et irréversibles sur les océans, les glaciers, les terres, les littoraux et les espèces"; et

« Attendu qu'aucun groupe, pays ou continent n'assume la responsabilité des changements climatiques mais que tous les êtres humains sont collectivement responsables d'y apporter une solution; et

« Attendu que la production de gaz à effet de serre a augmenté de 27 % au-dessus des niveaux de 1990 au Canada; et

« Attendu que nos chefs élus ont la responsabilité de rendre compte aux membres du public de leurs gestes pour enrayer la problématique des changements climatiques par égard pour la redevabilité; et

« Attendu que les jeunes en particulier, héritiers éventuels de cette Terre, notre seul demeure, démontrent un intérêt spécial pour cette question;

« Nous, les soussignés, adressons une pétition à l'Assemblée législative pour demander que l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario adopte rapidement le projet de loi 208 »—là, c'est le projet de loi 6—« la Loi sur la sensibilisation aux changements climatiques. »

Je suis d'accord avec la pétition. Je vais y signer mon nom et l'envoyer avec M. Stig.

1400

TAXATION

Mr. Robert Bailey: This petition is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty said he wouldn't raise taxes in the 2003 election, but in 2004 he brought in the health tax, the biggest tax hike in Ontario's history; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty will increase taxes yet again with his new 13% combined sales tax, at a time when families and businesses can least afford it; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty's new 13% sales tax will increase the cost of goods and services that families and businesses buy every day, such as ... gas at the pumps, home heating oil and electricity, postage stamps, haircuts, dry cleaning, home renovations, veterinary care, arena ice and soccer field rentals;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Dalton McGuinty government wake up to Ontario's current economic reality and stop raising taxes, once and for all, on Ontario's hard-working families and businesses."

I agree with this and will send it down with Ana.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

LOWERING ENERGY COSTS FOR NORTHERN ONTARIANS ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LA RÉDUCTION DES COÛTS D'ÉNERGIE POUR LES ONTARIENS DU NORD

Mr. Phillips, on behalf of Mr. Duncan, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 44, An Act to implement the Northern Ontario energy credit / Projet de loi 44, Loi mettant en oeuvre le crédit pour les coûts d'énergie dans le Nord de l'Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Debate?

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I'll be sharing the vast majority of my time with the members from Pickering-Scarborough East and Timiskaming-Cochrane.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Pickering-Scarborough East.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: The minister without portfolio and chair of cabinet is far too generous with his time. I think he learned that from the House leader, I believe, if I'm not mistaken, who is similarly generous with her time in sharing it in regard to legislation we have before us.

I'm pleased today to be able to rise on behalf of my colleague the Honourable Dwight Duncan, our Minister of Finance, and pleased to re-engage the discussion and the second reading leadoff debate on Bill 44, the Lowering Energy Costs for Northern Ontarians Act, 2010. I look forward as well, during the course of the afternoon, to hearing from the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane, who will certainly be able to add a more localized flavour to the debate on this particular piece of legislation.

This was a key piece of the matters presented in our 2010 budget. Bill 16, which is the principal piece of legislation regarding the budget, is currently before committee, having had its witnesses this past Thursday. This coming Thursday, the members of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs will be dealing with the clause-by-clause matters of Bill 16 before that is reintroduced into this Legislature.

Bill 44 builds on the work that came out of the budget and addresses more specifically the matter of energy costs for northern Ontarians. To provide a bit of an overview, I think, is always important to do within the context of budget bills in particular, even though the matters within them may be a little more focused than would otherwise be the case. But it's important to recognize that we are, hopefully, at the tail end now of, but certainly have been in, a worldwide economic recession. It remains one of the most pressing challenges for many jurisdictions throughout the world. We only need to look the local, national and international media to see what's happening in places like Greece, Portugal, Spain and Ireland to understand how significant the economic challenges are not only to Ontario and Ontarians but throughout the world, and why each piece of legislation that's brought forward in the context of budgetary considerations has an impact on Ontarians, either within communities or throughout Ontario, and why those are important matters in the context of trying to manage our way through and out of the economic recession that we have all been facing.

Countries throughout the world—Ontario as a sub-national government is no different in this regard—have been facing sharp declines in revenue and increasing expenses as people turn to their governments for support. I was interested in today's meeting—I'm probably wrong about the number, since I was listening to it on the radio and not having a chance to hear the details, but I thought that the numbers in Greece were some \$161 billion, if I'm not mistaking the kind of numbers being tossed around, for the purpose of providing them with a system to give some context of the scale that's sometimes required. But in Ontario we're clear about what we have to do in these times, and that is we have to create jobs, we have to help families and we have to establish the appropriate conditions for future economic growth.

During the course of the throne speech we introduced the Open Ontario plan, which focuses the government's resources on areas that will open the province for new ideas, new investment and jobs. They will do just those kinds of things we need to do in the creation of jobs, helping families and making sure we have the right economic conditions for the future. To move the Open Ontario plan forward, the 2010 budget includes investments in posts-secondary education, health care and skills training, and we're ensuring that all Ontarians benefit from the Open Ontario plan.

In recent years, Ontario's resource-based industries have faced very, very significant challenges, including and not limited to the strong Canadian dollar. And we've

seen very recently how the Canadian dollar now has reached and even broken through par with its American counterpart, and hovers in the range of 98, 98 and a half, 99 cents parity or even slightly above that. Currently, there is no expectation that it is going to change very much any time soon.

And the resource-based industries are faced with increased global competition. How many times have people stood in this Legislature recently and talked about what's happening to resource-based industries, and the fact that it's not just an Ontario issue, it's a Canadian issue, an international issue; that we are competing now more and more so globally in the context of resource-based industries here in Ontario.

The mining and forest product industries are mainstays of northern Ontario's economy and they've been particularly hard hit by weak demand and soft commodity prices during this very significant recession that we are all still working our way through. But particularly interesting, a further challenge for northern Ontario is that many of its communities rely on single resource-based industries. In southern Ontario—many of us have our ridings here—we're not as familiar with it. We don't live in that world where the entire economy of a community is so strongly driven by single resource-based activity; we tend to be more diversified. When we are hit hard by a recession and by the economy, it tends to be in pockets in the community. In northern Ontario, more significantly when a community is hit by the result of an economic downturn or a change in the condition of their single most important employer in the community, it hits every family in the community in a very, very substantive way.

Northern Ontario faces significant structural changes and challenges as well. They are remote, in many cases, from major markets. We often talk about Ontario and southern Ontario and Toronto as its capital as being within a day's reach of hundreds of millions of people, of the major markets in North America. Well, that's not the case for those more remote communities in northern Ontario because they are much farther from those major markets, and that demands transportation networks and the capacity to move products and get products in there that are necessary to do the work they're doing.

They lack the industrial diversification, exactly what I was mentioning, in the context of what we experience often in southern Ontario, where we have a variety of industrial activity going on. Where one may be hit at some point, others pick up the slack for a period of time. Certainly, we saw that most recently with the economic downturn in the area of the auto sector, places like Oshawa in Durham region, which is, in part, within my riding—not Oshawa itself, but certainly Pickering as part of Durham region. Whether it's them or whether it's Windsor or St. Catharines, we saw the impact of the auto sector decline very significantly in those areas. Having said that, they weren't the single industry in those towns and communities, so at least they were buffered to some extent by virtue of other industrial opportunities. That's often not the case in northern Ontario.

1410

The government recognizes the very unique challenges and circumstances of northern communities.

I'm looking forward to the second reading debate both this afternoon and during the coming days. I'm particularly looking forward to the member—from our side—from Sault Ste. Marie, the member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan, the member from Algoma—Manitoulin, and even this afternoon, as part of the second reading leadoff hour available to us, the member from Timiskaming—Cochrane, because each of those members will be able to bring a perspective on the importance of this legislation from those who live in those communities, those who represent those communities and those who know first-hand on a day-to-day basis what the impact of a resource-based industry is and how important this particular legislation is going to be to support those industries within their communities.

As part of the Open Ontario plan, we want to strengthen the northern economy. That's a big part of what we're trying to do. At the same time as we're strengthening the economy, we also want to protect the environment and, most particularly, want protection for the boreal forest region. So we have to do this balancing act between generating, supporting and creating opportunities for economic growth, at the same time protecting the important environmental assets of this province.

Through the Open Ontario plan, the McGuinty government will help open northern Ontario to new investments and new jobs. At the same time, we're going to provide relief to northern industries and residents from the higher energy costs they face. This has been a matter of discussion over an extended period of time, both here in this Legislature and certainly amongst our members in caucus—calling upon government, as we move through these processes, not to forget the needs of northern Ontario as it relates to the cost of energy and particularly the cost of electricity.

We have responded to that in a variety of ways over time. This particular legislation is an important part of the 2010 budget submission, to provide relief from some of the high energy costs, particularly for industry and residents as well.

To help low- or middle-income families and individuals in the north with their energy costs, we're proposing a new, permanent northern Ontario energy credit. Northern Ontarians who pay rent or property tax for their principal residence will be eligible for an annual credit of up to \$130 for a single person age 18 and older, and up to \$200 for a family. This would include single-parent families, as well.

To target assistance for those who need it most, the credit will also be income-tested to some extent. The credit will be reduced for single persons who have adjusted net incomes over \$35,000, and it will be completely eliminated once those incomes exceed \$48,000. Similarly, for families with adjusted net incomes over \$45,000, the amount will be reduced.

As noted in the recent budget, in order to provide northern residents with timely assistance, the government

is proposing an interim method of payment for this particular year. Northern residents who pay rent or property tax for their principal residence will be eligible for the credit. Northern residents who live on-reserve and pay energy costs for their principal residence there as well would also be eligible for this credit.

For this year, 2010, they will apply to the Ministry of Revenue to receive the credit. It will be delivered this year in two instalments, the first this November, and the second would be in February 2011 as part of the 2010-11 fiscal year. Since this is a permanent tax credit and not a one-time-only tax credit, applications for subsequent years will be part of the personal income tax return. So, once it's all in place, it will be much easier for those credits to be rolled out to individuals and families without them having to apply for it specifically. But, for this year, since it's new and it will take some time to get it in place, there will be a requirement to make that application through the Ministry of Revenue.

Some applications will be distributed by mail. They'll also be available over the Internet and at designated northern locations.

The effort certainly will be to make sure that the availability of the applications are widely spread using a variety of technologies, everything from hard copy, to receiving them by mail, to being able to acquire that information online. Information regarding the 2010 credit will become available once the application forms are ready for distribution. I'm saying all of this, obviously, in the context of and subject to the legislation being approved by this Legislature. None of this will occur, obviously, in the absence of that happening.

The credit will be available to eligible residents of the districts of Algoma, Cochrane, Kenora, Manitoulin, Nipissing, Parry Sound, Rainy River, Sudbury, Thunder Bay and Timiskaming. For this year, 2010, about a quarter of a million families and single people, over half of those in northern Ontario, would benefit from about \$35 million in assistance. I think that bears repeating: Over half of northerners would be eligible to benefit from this energy tax credit and that assistance would be some \$35 million in 2010.

It will be the objective of the government, subject to the induction of this legislation, to see that that credit is paid quarterly in subsequent years, and it seems better if one can do that because it means that those credit dollars literally are available at points in time closer to when people are paying their energy bills as opposed to having them come, say, semi-annually or annually, at a time when the money wouldn't necessarily be there, but it wouldn't be available in the fashion when the bills are coming to them.

The northern Ontario energy credit is just one of the government's initiatives for northern Ontario. We're proposing a number of measures to further encourage job creation and economic growth as part of the Open Ontario plan and certainly as part of our 2010-11 budget.

The northern industrial electricity rate program is a three-year program, averaging \$150 million a year

annually, that would provide electricity price rebates of two cents per kilowatt hour to qualifying large industries that commit to an energy efficiency and sustainability plan. On average, it's projected that this would reduce industrial electricity prices by about 25% for those large facilities, based on 2009 consumption. This incentive is obviously intended to protect and create jobs, so it has obviously a twofold purpose: One is to ensure that jobs that are there are retained; and two, it's to build opportunity to create new jobs in northern Ontario.

The government is also enhancing economic development opportunities such as in the Ring of Fire, an area with potentially large deposits of minerals such as chromite, nickel, copper and platinum. I'm not sure whether the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane will be speaking to this but I'll make a couple of comments, and I know his background is such that I hope he will pick this up. From my limited understanding, as part of this process, our budgetary process and discussion about the Ring of Fire, this could very well be an opportunity that will be unparalleled in many, many decades, maybe even since the 19th century with the discovery of nickel. The opportunities that exist for real economic growth in the north, sustained economic growth, are very significant and I'm hoping that the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane can provide further enlightenment in that regard as well.

We're providing as well some \$45 million over the next three years for a new project-based skills training program to help aboriginal peoples and northern Ontarians participate in and benefit from the emerging economic development opportunities. This particular program will help build community capacity to undertake base mapping, develop resource inventories and gather other essential information about the Ring of Fire. It would support community land use planning and environmentally sustainable development that would benefit aboriginal peoples and northern Ontarians, and help implement the proposed Far North Act, 2010.

We will be putting in place a new Ring of Fire co-ordinator to help lead the collective efforts in advancing the economic promise and opportunity in this area, while protecting the boreal forest region.

The opportunities with the Ring of Fire area as it's described, and the potential is almost unlimited. But it will take time, obviously, and it will take investment and significant effort to realize the opportunities that present themselves.

1420

Also, we're partnering with Sudbury and Thunder Bay to establish pilot economic development planning areas. These are two significant urban centres in northern Ontario. They're significant to large geographic regions around them. People in communities very much depend on these urban centres in northern Ontario, because there are fewer of them and they tend to be further apart than in areas like southern Ontario, and it's important that we partner and provide assistance with economic development initiatives in those areas.

We want to help unemployed older workers by implementing the targeted initiative for older workers. I had a chance to speak about that briefly when we were debating Bill 16 and the importance of working together with our federal partners—with other orders of government. In this particular case, this is a joint federal-provincial initiative.

I said at that time, and I think it bears repeating often, that our constituents expect us more and more to be working closely and in a co-operative way with other orders of government. They don't expect us to be going it alone. They expect we will use the limited resources—their tax dollars, our tax dollars—to ensure we get the best bang for our buck. One of the significant ways of doing that is through partnerships between the federal and provincial governments. This targeted initiative for older unemployed workers is exactly the kind of thing we need to do on a going-forward basis.

As well, we're making significant infrastructure investments in the north. It's not just about energy costs, although this bill is specifically about energy costs in that sense, but in the context of the budget, as part of the budget deliberations, it's a significant part of what we need to do in our infrastructure investments.

The government is making investments in infrastructure of nearly \$1.2 billion to strengthen northern communities through improving highways, hospitals, water and waste water systems, and other infrastructure in those communities. That's about \$1.2 billion in infrastructure investment. That will create a lot of jobs and help to enhance, re-establish and rebuild infrastructure that maybe has deteriorated over many decades. The investments are expected to support some 10,000 jobs in 2010-11.

A little more specifically, some of the things this \$1.2 billion and these 10,000 jobs will be engaged in are things like the Thunder Bay consolidated courthouse, which obviously will improve access to justice and spur downtown revitalization in Thunder Bay. I can speak to that in the context of areas close to me: the Durham consolidated courthouse in Oshawa, and how significant a project that has been from a build standpoint. I can appreciate what people in Thunder Bay can expect from building a consolidated courthouse: the jobs that is going to provide and help revitalize the downtown. Part of what was achieved in the city of Oshawa through this very kind of initiative was a revitalization of their downtown, exactly the kind of thing we're going to see in Thunder Bay.

The Ontario Provincial Police modernization project is going to include the construction of new detachments, regional command centres and forensic identification units in 16 communities, including nine northern locations.

We're going to see the expansion of the 100-kilometre corridor of Highways 11 and 17 between Thunder Bay and Nipigon to four lanes. That obviously can't all occur during one single year—changing 100 kilometres plus of highway from two to four lanes—but construction on two

projects along this corridor will begin in 2010-11, with work on the remainder to follow.

We'll be providing up to \$15 million to support Huron Central Railway's proposal for \$33 million of infrastructure investment on the rail line from Sault Ste. Marie to Sudbury. We're all well aware of the importance of rail traffic as a means of moving goods and people in northern Ontario, in addition to the road network that exists.

In the past six years, we have implemented a number of initiatives that build on existing investments. These include substantial assistance to the forest products sector since 2005 and in energy cogeneration to help it reposition itself in the global marketplace.

In 2007-08, there was some \$82 million for the northern region through the municipal infrastructure investment initiative, some \$39 million through the rural infrastructure investment initiative and \$36.5 million for municipal roads and bridges. Now, if someone sits down and does a bit of math on that—I can't do it off the top of my head quickly, but I'm going to say it probably comes out to about \$115 million in 2007-08 in the northern region for municipal activity and rural activity and roads and bridges—not a small sum of money, even though it's spread out over a large geography.

We're establishing a new northern Ontario entrepreneurial program, and that'll be established under the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp. The fund has already provided grants to more than 940 projects in 2009-10, which has created and retained more than 2,300 jobs in northern Ontario.

A few years ago, we set out on a strategy to reduce the business education tax. We heard broadly across the province that the business education tax was a disincentive to business, it was unfair across the province and it was utilized across the province in different values. There were no fair comparatives between communities. Although that money is coming back to the province at this point, it's not staying in the community as part of our investment in education. We made a determination that we were going to reduce the business education tax rates across the province to a more normative level that would be equal throughout the province at the very least, and those who might have had a low rate could have retained that, but those with higher rates were going to be brought down over time.

We have accelerated the business education tax cuts for northern businesses. They've benefited from the full implementation of the reduction this year and the savings from that will be \$70 million over three years. When we find opportunities to accelerate initiatives and put them in place to provide opportunities for northern Ontarians and their businesses to benefit from it and to support them in times when the economic climate isn't as good, we're certainly going to seek ways of doing that.

There's some \$40 million over three years invested for initiatives to support the mining modernization act, and these were announced in the 2009 budget.

One of the initiatives that's important that we take throughout the province, particularly in rural and

northern Ontario, is the introduction of broadband. We all like the fact that if we had the opportunity to use it, our access to broadband and high-speed Internet access—but that hasn't been the norm in Ontario. It has been fairly isolated. I know that in eastern Ontario and northern Ontario there has been a great call to be able to participate in the economy through access to broadband and effectively high-speed Internet service.

We're investing up to \$32.75 million towards the province's building broadband in rural and northern Ontario program. This was launched in September 2009. This will be to support projects in partnership with the federal government, such as the federal government's own Broadband Canada: Connecting Rural Canadians, another example where we found opportunities to work together with our federal counterparts by each of us investing money in matters that are important to Ontarians, rural Ontarians, but particularly to northern Ontarians, and that's to begin getting more ready access to broadband.

We're investing some \$30 million to support the consultations necessary via the Northern Table on sustainable land use planning and resource management in the Far North. These were commitments that were made a couple of years ago in the 2008 budget that are being carried through at this point. To the extent that we can figure out methodologies by consulting and working with experts for sustainable land use and sustainable resource management, that will speak well for northern Ontario as we move forward.

There are any number of other matters—and I'm not going to go through them—that we have been investing in, the principal point being that the particular legislation, Bill 44, is going to assist with energy costs in northern Ontario for businesses and residents, but it's not a one-off. It's not a one-off decision because it's a matter of electricity costs. It's part of a more overall strategy agenda, one that either identifies opportunities, such as the Ring of Fire, the most current activity, to figure out ways to invest and make that happen, or finding areas in northern Ontario where their support is necessary, giving that support and, where possible, expediting, such as the business education tax reductions and moving that more quickly forward than was initially anticipated.

I want to speak to a couple of improvements in the health care area and then I want to make sure that there's more than adequate time for the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane to be able to make his comments as well.

It's important to northern Ontarians that the Northern Ontario School of Medicine, which opened in 2005 and celebrated the graduation of its first 55 students in the spring 2009—just a year ago, we put in 55 new docs who were trained in northern Ontario and who ideally were able to practise close to home and provide the service that's so desperately needed in northern Ontario.

1430

We invested some \$40 million in land ambulances as part of our 50-50 cost sharing, as part of the funding arrangement we had for—

Mr. Howard Hampton: On a point of order, Speaker: I look at orders of the day, and it says, "G44 ... northern ... energy credit." I've been listening, and nothing the member is saying has anything to do with the northern energy credit. I thought it was a requirement of the rules that we speak to the legislation which is being debated.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you very much. I would just remind the member of the rule and ask him to ensure that his comments are consistent with the bill being debated.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: Thanks, Speaker. I appreciate that, and I appreciate the interjection from the member opposite.

I think I clearly stated that Bill 44 is part of our overall budget package. It's part of the initiatives to provide for northern Ontarians—in this case, through rebates for electricity costs, both as residents and businesses. I thought it important that, as part of that, we put it into that broader context of the investments and initiatives that make northern Ontario a great place in which to live, work and invest, and to be able to communicate that to Ontarians. It's important that we keep it in a slightly broader context, and the member opposite might like me to, at this point in time. Thus, I felt it was incredibly important that we speak to some of those other investments and opportunities that exist.

The time—as I say, it is short. I do want to hear most particularly from the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane. I'm very pleased to be able to stand today as we lead off second reading debate on Bill 44. I'm looking forward to debate here in the Legislature during the coming days.

I hope, as we complete this, that all members of the House will see the value in supporting Bill 44 particularly, though, not in supporting the bill for the bill's sake but supporting the bill for the sake of northern Ontarians, both residents and businesses, as we try to make for a better living environment and, more importantly, to build the economy in northern Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Timiskaming–Cochrane.

Mr. David Ramsay: I'd like to thank the member from Pickering–Scarborough East for helping us share the minister's time, and I thank the minister for kicking off the second reading of this bill.

I liked the member's approach, in fact, because he really put a lot of the economic development initiatives of this government into perspective. While it's certainly about this particular energy credit today, it is part of a whole package directed towards northern Ontario and helping northern Ontarians prosper.

Primarily, it's about the cost of power. If the truth be told, the cost of power is going up, and it's going up because we have to find clean, sustainable ways of producing power today. Long are the days gone when we could rely on dirty power. Ontario is one of the first jurisdictions in the world to start to eliminate coal power. That's a firm commitment of this government, and it's a good thing to do. It's a difficult thing to do, and you can't

do it overnight. We certainly wanted to do it sooner, but we had such a high reliance on coal generation that it does take time. New sources of green, sustainable power are more expensive, so you can't bring those in just as fast as you might want to because you're going to be raising the cost of power up far too fast.

It's very exciting what we have here in Ontario with the Green Energy and Green Economy Act. Basically, Premier McGuinty has positioned us as the foremost jurisdiction in North America. To say that, we're lagging some of the rest of the world—the Europeans, especially—but Ontario is the first jurisdiction in North America to start to take that clean energy ethic from Europe and apply it here. It's positioning us in a very favourable place, as we are starting to dig our way out of this recession and retune our manufacturing pace.

We now have an opportunity, because of our Green Energy Act, to start to invest in green energy products. In fact, we insist that 50% of the products installed in Ontario are made in Ontario. Now we're going to be in a position where, because we're the first into this, when other jurisdictions attempt to catch up, they will be buying their turbines and solar panels from Ontario manufacturers down the road. That's going to create more and more jobs for Ontarians and create prosperity for Ontario families. That's what it's about, and we are very, very pleased to be able to do that.

We have a system of what we call a feed-in tariff; again, the first jurisdiction in North America to basically guarantee a rate of return for people who decide to invest in green, sustainable electricity. We call that FIT, a feed-in tariff.

We've recently had a competition where about 184 projects were awarded across the province. The interesting thing is that northern Ontario did very well in that. One of the reasons, which is kind of surprising, maybe, for a lot of people, is that the generation of electricity using a photovoltaic sail, using the sun to generate that power, is very, very effective and efficient in northern Ontario. It works better in cold climates than it does in warm climates. Traditionally, we've sort of thought of solar power, when it was first brought in in North America 20 or 30 years ago, as something that happened in New Mexico and Arizona. There were and still are some farms down there. But they work very, very effectively in cold weather. That's going to be a wonderful boon for northern Ontario.

Also it's a boon for northern Ontario because we have a bigger sunlight footprint in the north than many places in southern Ontario. Unlike the wind, which only blows in certain areas, usually off big lakes, the sun, by and large, shines very evenly across northern Ontario. What it means is that all northerners will be able to share in that bounty, which is really excellent.

It's going to take a while to start to get these developed, but there were many of these projects awarded in northern Ontario. I've had some in my area, as they are across the north. Major companies and some co-operatives have applied and been award winners for this.

Because of the high rate of return, we're going to get a good investment. In the case of a Canadian solar award in Temiskaming Shores, in my area, the city of Temiskaming Shores is going to be getting a sum of money every year. There's going to be a donation to the community foundation every year because the revenues are so great for this. So it's going to be of great benefit for our community as well as the electrical power grid of this province. We're very, very pleased to see that.

Part of what we're doing also that's going to take some time as we ramp up for this so that we have the capacity is a green transmission system. It was the previous Minister of Energy who announced the start of new construction for a green transmission system in Ontario that will not only facilitate the efficient movement of electricity throughout the province but, eventually, when we get to the point where we can export again, we'll be in a good position to start to do that to help other jurisdictions.

What's very nice also about the solar power and wind power is that, unlike the traditional megaplants that had to be only in certain parts of the province, we have what's called distributed generation now, which means many of us in less-populated areas of the province are going to be able to share in some of the wealth generation coming from the generation of power. It's nice to see that generation distributed across the province, and the north getting its share.

One project I'm working on with a co-op in my area is to find ways to harvest biomass material both from wood waste and agricultural waste to generate heat and power. That would have tremendously significant economic impact to northern Ontario, if we, for the very first time, could start to produce green, sustainable power in our own backyard.

Part of the act that we're talking about today and why we want to help, in this transition, northern Ontarians with the cost of their energy is the fact that we live in a cold climate. We live in a harsh, cold climate that also is a long, cold climate, more so than southern Ontario, so our energy costs are higher. With that, not only do our costs increase compared to those for southern Ontario consumers, but also, because we don't produce any of this energy in the north, we basically are exporting our dollars to buy this power, especially for fossil fuels. If we can start to harness green, sustainable biomass material both from the farms and from the forest, then we can start to basically create our own economy based on energy rather than boosting Alberta's economy, Saudi Arabia's economy or Venezuela's economy. We have to purchase those goods, so this would be a great advantage to us. The material is there.

1440

It also gives us a new use for forest fibre, as we are obviously in a very bad slump in the forest industry right now because of market conditions. We have to look at new markets, because the Americans aren't building houses like they used to anymore and people aren't reading newspapers like they used to anymore. We have

to diversify the products that we create from wood and wood fibre. So there is great opportunity here.

There are people up in my area who want to create district heating plants, not only to create electricity but to create steam that could heat industry and residences. There's a lot of opportunity, but right now we need some immediate help.

That's why the Ontario government is coming with a program that is going to help single people and families with the cost of energy in northern Ontario. As my colleague has mentioned, those grants are up to \$130 per single person and \$200 for families. It is targeted to income—so that after \$48,000 of income for a single person, they're no longer eligible for that; as for a \$65,000 maximum family income, that family is no longer eligible for that—because we want to target the people who need it the most so that we can really benefit those people. So I'm very pleased about that.

I would like to congratulate our northern caucus on the work they have done with our finance minister on this. We did great work, and I'm very pleased with my colleagues who pressed the point, but I have to certainly compliment our finance minister, Dwight Duncan, for listening to our pleas that we felt this was really necessary for northern families; that energy costs are getting tougher and tougher up there to bear, especially in such harsh economic times. So we're very, very pleased that he listened to that.

On the other side, we also know that on the industrial rate of electricity, the cost of power also hurts our heavy industry in northern Ontario. While electricity rates in southern Ontario are fairly competitive with the neighbouring Great Lakes states, in northern Ontario our competitors are basically Manitoba and Quebec. Because of the wonderful topography they have, they are able to produce clean, low-cost hydraulic electricity. Our north is fairly flat, so we don't—we're a bit topographically challenged, compared to our neighbouring provinces. I wish it wasn't so, but that's the way it is. We can still develop good run-of-the-river projects in northern Ontario without flooding land, and we are embarking on that and improving many of our sites today, and there is still maybe 5,000 megawatts of potential in northern Ontario for that.

As we do all that, though, we're going to need to help out. When I was Minister of Natural Resources, we brought some help for the paper industry. Now we're looking at major electricity consumers, industrial consumers, to help them out at this time. That's a program that we also had fought for. We're very happy to be able to bring that in.

My colleague had mentioned that another area of interest in the big economic development project in northern Ontario is the so-called Ring of Fire. This is kind of a sleeper. This is a huge mineral deposit of various base minerals, many of which we mine today, except for the big one there that's new, and that's chromite. That's very necessary for stainless steel. This is a massive deposit in a very isolated part of northern

Ontario, and it will have to be developed carefully. It will have to be developed in full partnership with our First Nations people, who reside in that part of the world, like what I saw with the De Beers diamond mine, a little west of Attawapiskat along the Attawapiskat River. When I was there on the first visit during the construction phase, 40% of the people there were from First Nations. It was really great to see that in such isolated places we have great participation of our First Nations in that area. The Ring of Fire is another big potential for northern Ontario.

This bill, as we're helping today with the immediate cost of power, is just one small piece of a full economic development package for the north in order to make sure that our families prosper. That, with the highway development and everything else that we're doing in the northern Ontario growth plan—we're very excited that this government has a vision for the north, that we're going to be prospering, and that northern Ontarians who reside in the largest part of this province have confidence that this government has a vision for our future and is working in partnership with northerners and is listening. I think that's the most important part of all of this: that northerners understand that their government is listening. I think the test of that is what we've seen in this budget. If any region of the province—embarrassingly so, I must say—northern Ontario certainly got its fair share. I'm very pleased about that. Again, I want to thank our Minister of Finance for that.

We would hope that we would get the support of the House to make sure this bill passes.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I am happy that the government is trying to assist people in northern Ontario who are suffering very much under a recession partially caused by the government themselves and particularly with regard to the high energy prices that we are now experiencing. No one who has read anything with regard to energy costs can deny that this government has had a great deal to do with the rising energy costs that we are experiencing now. The only thing that's saving this government at the present time is that we've lost so many manufacturing jobs that the manufacturing sector is not using our electricity as they were in the past, when we had previous governments, and that that surplus of energy is allowing some flexibility with regard to going forward.

My concern is not only for the poor people of northern Ontario who are going to be helped with their energy bills; my concern is with the fact that this government seems to want to recognize and help people in northern Ontario but ignore people in rural eastern Ontario who have lower household incomes and need the help, arguably, as much as or even more than some people in northern Ontario. But they are left out in the cold, so to speak. People in rural eastern Ontario suffer from very, very harsh winters. In some cases, they have further to go than many of the people who live in northern Ontario who will benefit from these particular breaks in terms of their energy costs.

I only ask the government: Why have you forgotten rural eastern Ontario, where the people are suffering just as much as the people in northern Ontario? Thank you for doing something for northern Ontario, but why have you forgotten eastern Ontario in this bill?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I think the member from Carleton—Mississippi Mills make a good point: What about the rest of Ontario? I think that's a fair assumption to make because all of us are having to pay higher energy prices, especially after the HST gets kicked in this summer, and the proposed increase that we're going to see come on to Ontario hydro bills, for a total of about 18% this year.

But I want to ask the member across the way, my good friend the member from Timiskaming—

Mr. David Ramsay: Cochrane.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: —Cochrane—sorry; it used to be Timiskaming at one time—but Timiskaming—Cochrane why he didn't take time to speak to the actual bill. Instead, he chose to talk about how well things are in northern Ontario and about how northerners are very, very happy with the Liberal government. I'm just wondering where he is travelling in northern Ontario, because I can tell you, that's not the case.

I was just at a meeting on Sunday in Cornwall with school board trustees from northern Ontario. As I spoke to them, they were far from being happy. It didn't matter if they were from Sturgeon Falls, it didn't matter if they were from Cochrane, it didn't matter if they were from Thunder Bay, it didn't matter if they were from the Ottawa area: People were somewhat upset with this government in regards to the latest move in regards to the full-time JK and how it affects French school boards.

1450

But overall, people in northern Ontario are mad as hell at this government, and I'll tell you why. If you go to Sturgeon Falls, Smooth Rock Falls, Iroquois Falls, Timmins, Hearst, Terrace Bay, Thunder Bay, Kenora, Fort Frances, Nairn Centre or Sault Ste. Marie—it doesn't matter where you go in northern Ontario, there are huge job losses as a result of this government's inability to deal with the economic problems that face northern Ontario. For this government member to say, "Everything is wonderful and these wonderful investments we're making in the north are making people happy," I just want to let you know that that is a big stretch, because I can tell you, people in the north are not pretty enamoured with this government.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Essex.

Mr. Bruce Crozier: It's a pleasure for me to make a few comments with regard to those made by my colleagues from Pickering—Scarborough East and from—

Mr. Mike Colle: Timmins.

Mr. Bruce Crozier: Timmins—no.

Mr. Mike Colle: Cochrane-Timiskaming, isn't it?

Mr. Bruce Crozier: Timiskaming—Cochrane. Thank you very much.

As always, they have a great ability to enlighten all of us on some of the aspects of the bill that we have before us. One of those things that was mentioned and that I would like to emphasize is that this northern energy cost bill will help some quarter of a million families, both single people and married people in the north.

I don't think any of us want to try to minimize the issues that the north faces. I, for example, being from the most southerly riding in the province—we don't face a lot of these issues. But what this is trying to do is at least help mitigate those. For example, the maximum credit that a family receives would cover any increased costs from the oft-mentioned HST, to the tune of about \$2,500. I think if you put that together with the other tax credits—property tax credits that are available for seniors in the north, and tax credits that are available to low-income families in the north—if you put all of these together, I think it goes to show how the government is bent on mitigating some of these additional costs that we all recognize we face, but which we have to deal with.

I'm pleased to support this bill because it supports the north. Being from the most southerly riding, I want to show as much support for the north—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member for Halton.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I would call this bill typical of the Liberal government: There's not much there to support, but there's nothing there to vote against. It's kind of a wishy-washy bill. It's going to supply a small grant to northerners, probably a little less than half of one month's power bill. There is an aspect of it, I believe, that gives an industrial credit. Again, it's in a very small amount, especially given the price increases that the north has had for their power. It doesn't get them back to where they were in 2003, for sure.

The north has a particular situation in that it has a surplus of power—certainly, the ability to produce power in the north. It has a surplus of power. Those power plants were put in in order to supply pulp and paper, forestry mills and mining operations. Because it's now part of the great Ontario power program, that power has increased far beyond its cost of production.

This government has failed to recognize that that electricity in the north is tantamount to jobs. You can't have jobs without pulp and paper and mining in the north. In order to get those jobs back, that power has to become competitive. It's a simple thing. You've taken a very, very small step in the right direction, but the step is so small it's difficult to see that you have progressed beyond the point where you started. In fact, I think this government has retrogressed, certainly in the north in the destruction of the pulp and paper and forest industry and the mining industry.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Pickering–Scarborough East has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: Unfortunately, although we could share our time earlier, it's not possible for me to share my time now with the member from Timiskaming–

Cochrane, so you probably won't get a direct response from him, member from Timmins–James Bay, but you may get a response at a future time during debate.

Very quickly, I appreciate the comments that have been made, the expression of support both by the member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills and the member from Halton: not an overwhelming endorsement but a signal of support for northern Ontario, which is important. I would remind the member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills that I don't think we created the great recession we just went through. I think we inherited that from others along the way.

To the member from Timmins–James Bay, I can only say that my friend from Timiskaming–Cochrane certainly has the ear of his constituents. I'm sure that when the economy is not great, people are never enamoured with their governments at that point in time. But I think probably he's hearing from his constituents that he is working as hard as he can and we are working as hard as we can to provide initiatives and opportunities for them and to support them where the need is the greatest.

To the member from Essex who, like myself, represents a southern Ontario riding, although mine is not nearly as far south as his, it behooves us to pay close attention to what the needs are in northern Ontario—and in eastern Ontario, but today we're talking about northern Ontario—to ensure we understand as best we can those needs and extend our support, where it's available to us, to those in northern Ontario, because their needs are very much different. Certainly, the industrial electricity rebate program, a three-year program averaging \$150 million annually, is not a small sum. It's a large number of dollars, and if it can reduce the electricity rate costs by about 25% for large facilities based on 2009—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The time is up. Further debate.

Mr. Norm Miller: It's my pleasure to have the opportunity to speak this afternoon on Bill 44, An Act to implement the Northern Ontario energy credit, 2010.

Before I really get started, I would like to point out that I may be sharing my time with our energy critic, Mr. Yakubuski, the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. I say “maybe” because he's off celebrating Polish Constitution Day today and it's off-site. I know he was planning on sharing this lead-off with me, because this bill has mainly to do with energy. However, he may not make it back in time. I'm sure if he doesn't make it back to share the time, he'll speak in another rotation.

I should just point out, though, that the government is not giving us a lot of time to prepare for these bills. I note the health critic sitting beside me, the member from Whitby–Oshawa. There was a new health bill introduced just this afternoon, and she's expected to deliver her one-hour leadoff speech tomorrow morning. I would simply say that's not very fair, especially if the government is hoping to have a reasonable critique of what could be a complicated health bill. There should be a little more time allowed for the opposition to be able to analyze the bill and also to be able to caucus it, because we won't

have had a caucus meeting before our health critic needs to do that leadoff. As with this bill today, we just learned on Thursday that they were introducing a finance-area bill, without any knowledge of what it might be about until it was introduced on Thursday. Now here I am doing the lead. Once again, we have not had a caucus meeting to actually discuss the bill, so most of our caucus would be unaware of what's in the bill. It's not fair for me to be stating the position of our complete caucus before we've had a chance to talk about it at our caucus meeting.

I think if the government was truly interested in getting the best-quality bills, they would give us a little more lead; they would warn us a little bit ahead of time and give us a little more time to be able to prepare for the debate.

1500

As I say, this is a finance bill, but it really has more to do with energy. It is mentioned in page 16 of the budget that northern residents who pay rent or property tax for their principal residence would be eligible for an annual credit of up to \$130 for a single person and up to \$200 for a family, including single parents, to target the assistance to those who need it most. The credit would be reduced for a single person with adjusted net income over \$35,000 and eliminated when income exceeded \$48,000, and reduced for families with adjusted family net income over \$45,000 and eliminated when income exceeds \$65,000.

Really, this bill is going to mean that families and individuals in the north will receive a tax credit that I would say is a pretty minor tax credit—as I mentioned, up to \$130 for an individual and up to \$200 for a family.

Yet when you start adding up all the increases that this government has brought about for people's energy bills, the increases are going to outweigh this tax credit. Unfortunately, this is just for the north and as the member from eastern Ontario—what is it?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: Carleton–Mississippi Mills.

Mr. Norm Miller: —Carleton–Mississippi Mills pointed out, eastern Ontario won't be able to benefit, nor will Haliburton. Haliburton has one of the lowest family incomes in the province and yet they won't be able to benefit from this tax credit.

I would also question the way it's being done. For 2010, it's an application-based system, so you have to be aware of it and you have to apply for it and then you will receive two cheques. If you are aware of it and apply for it and qualify, you'll receive two cheques for the year. For 2011 and beyond, it switches to the federal government, to Revenue Canada, who will get the job of issuing four cheques a year, so if you're getting \$200—four cheques at \$50—it goes down, so you might be getting a \$10 cheque four times a year.

I would simply say that if you did the math and figured how much it costs for the government to actually go through the process of doing that, it probably costs more than \$50 to issue each one of those cheques, so I

really wonder about the way this government is going about actually doing the mechanics of being able to issue this very minor help for people with their energy bills.

Lord knows they are going to need it, particularly those in the north where it is colder, where you do use more energy. It's in large part because this government has made such a mess of their energy policies and the result has been great increases. They've made no progress on nuclear energy, despite—how many years is it now? Six years in government. They've really made no progress. They keep making the promise over and over to shut down coal-fired electricity generation; many, many times they've made this promise. The only person to actually shut down any coal-fired generating stations was Elizabeth Witmer when she was part of the PC government and she was the minister.

This government has made no progress, despite talking a good game all the time, bringing it up countless times and revising the date further outwards all the time. They've made no progress. The one thing they're very successfully doing is driving energy prices up, and they've been very good at that. We just learned recently that there's another 10% increase approved by the Ontario Energy Board—10%. That's ahead of the July 1 8% increase. We've got that 10%, plus 8% when the HST comes into effect on electricity, but not only electricity, for those people living in the north and around the province; electricity and gasoline for your car, and if you live in northern Ontario you're probably going to have a truck and it's going to burn a fair amount of gas and that's going to be a big extra charge. But you may also heat with oil. It's going to be on heating oil, or, if you're lucky enough to have natural gas, it'll be on that as well. So we have that 18%.

We just also learned about the \$53.7-million back-door charge that the government is putting on to fund some of their so-called green energy programs like the energy audit program. I note in the *Toronto Star* from April 28 that a watchdog group, the Consumers Council, is challenging that particular tax, that \$53-million new tax on energy. It says:

"Watchdog Takes Aim at 'Green' Tax; Consumers Council Challenges Plan to Put Charge on Hydro Bills to Pay for \$53.7-million Energy Fund." It's written by John Spears, the business reporter. It goes on:

"A consumers group has mounted a legal challenge against a \$53.7-million green energy fund that will be raised through a charge on hydro bills.

"The Consumers Council of Canada has filed a motion with the Ontario Energy Board challenging the levy, saying it amounts to an illegal tax." This government is very good at coming up with new taxes, new creative ways to find taxes that they usually don't call a tax. I think of the health premium; I don't believe they called that one a tax either.

"The levy, imposed by the provincial budget, will cost a typical consumer about \$4 a year.

"Consumers council lawyer Robert Warren said Ontario will likely impose similar levies on customers of

the province's two big gas utilities"—so they hit you on gas, too—"raising an additional \$100 million or more in total.

"The money in the electricity fund is to be used for such programs as home energy audits, or helping companies use solar power.

"But Warren says the levy is flawed, because it's imposed on local hydro utilities, who in turn raise it from their customers.

"It meets the classic definition of an indirect tax,' said Warren in an interview." I would call that a sneaky tax.

"Since the Constitution doesn't allow provinces to levy indirect taxes, that makes it unconstitutional, he said.

"A province can levy what's called a 'regulatory charge' for a specific regulatory scheme, but the levy doesn't meet that test, either, he said.

"This is general revenue for general use by the Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure,' he added.

"The C.D. Howe Institute has also argued that the levy is unconstitutional....

"Warren said the levy is bad policy as well as bad law.

"These burdens are all really in essence taxes, and they're regressive taxes,' he said.

"They're levied on consumers on the basis of the volume of electricity they use, and not on the basis of their income."

That's one small part of the layers of new charges that people are finding on their electricity bills.

Interjection.

Mr. Norm Miller: And all this, member from Nipissing, before the Green Energy Act comes into effect.

I think we're all in favour of green energy, but we don't want the economy to grind to a halt and we also don't want people to be forced out of their homes because they can't afford to pay their hydro bills.

With the green energy plan that the McGuinty government has come up with, they have this "buy high, sell low" policy, so they're paying up to 80 cents a kilowatt hour, when you get to the high end, for some solar power. That's being subsidized by all ratepayers and users of electricity, so that will definitely have the effect of driving the cost of electricity up further and further.

When the green energy bill was being introduced, we actually had a company, London Economics, do a study of some of the promises the government made, like the 50,000 jobs they promised on that one. They said that that couldn't be substantiated. They also said that there could be a range of increases in costs but that definitely the price of electricity would be going up, and quite significantly.

We have another recent initiative the government has brought into effect, the smart meters initiative, where we will be switching to time-of-use metering for families and small business. I would simply say that it's interesting that when you go around your constituency, you get a feel for what issues are important to people.

Two weeks ago, I was in Parry Sound and stopped at Orr's Meats, and the first issue Murray Orr wanted to talk about was energy costs and time-of-use metering. He pointed out that he has a butcher shop, and he can't shut off the compressors and the coolers and the freezers during the day, when prime time is. So his bill is going to go—I believe it's from about five and a half cents or six cents up to 9.2 cents for prime time. He figured that would cost him an extra \$800 a month—a very substantial increase. He was wondering how he was going to adapt to that—no choice but to turn things off during prime time, during the day.

1510

The other strange thing that seems to be happening is these smart meters. A lot of people have them installed in their homes, but they're not turned on yet. We're not yet on this time-of-use metering, but I can tell you that my office is receiving letters and emails and calls from people who are seeing their hydro bills go up significantly and don't really have an explanation for it. I know I've talked with other MPPs who have expressed the same concern, that for some reason, energy bills are going up, and the only thing they know is that they had a smart meter put in and all of a sudden their energy bill has gone up.

I wanted to give a sample so you would know it wasn't just me making this stuff up and that people were actually writing to me. For example, here's an email that just came in, actually, on May 2 from someone in Muskoka. I won't use their name because I haven't got their permission to use their name, but I will give the gist of what they are saying:

"I would like to add our concerns about the new hydro smart meters to others that I'm sure you have received. Our new meter was installed last August at our home on Kahshe Lake. We live here for six months of the year and it is closed up the other six months.

"Our actual usage from October 15 to January 13 was 15 kilowatt hours per day. Most of the time, except for a few days, we weren't here and everything was off except for heating our little storage area to 10. Then, under the same conditions, from only January 13 to February 11 our actual usage was 62 kilowatt hours per day! That's four times the usage per day under the exact same conditions! January may be a cold month, but not enough to make anything like that difference!

"Then, the next month, under the exact same conditions and probably just as cold outside, we used 45 kilowatt hours per day!

"I believe that these meters have some kind of fault. Please take the time to question Hydro One about them. We would like action sooner rather than later as many people are being over-billed, and the longer this goes on, the harder it will be to compensate people for the errors. In fact, I believe there may be a class-action lawsuit in the offing."

That's just one email. Here is another email that I have received. Let's see, which one makes more sense?

Interjection.

Mr. Norm Miller: Oh, he is back; okay. I'll try to leave Mr. Yakabuski some time, then.

Here's another email I received:

"I, along with many friends and family, have huge concerns over the direction our hydro rates are going." I think it's safe to say "up." That's my editorializing.

"Many people I have spoken to over the last week have stated their hydro bills have increased anywhere from 20% to 75% in the last month. Since this winter was to be considered easy by many standards, an increase such as that is unfounded.

"As it was explained to me by a customer service representative at Hydro One, the smart meters in this area have not even been activated as of yet. This creates even more concern since last month's rate was 5.5 cents per kilowatt hour, on average. With smart meters the rates will increase to as high as 9.3 cents per kilowatt hour, except between 9 p.m. and 7 a.m., weekends and holidays [when] it will drop to 4.4 cents per kilowatt hour.

"So if I understand this correctly, we are all supposed to wait until after 9 p.m. to cook, do laundry, wash dishes etc. or pay through the nose for hydro. Where is the reality in that? I would have to think that if everyone were to wait until 9 p.m. or the weekend time periods we would end up taxing the grid even more" then. That was from Mark Holmes in Nobel, Ontario, who is quite concerned about his energy bills.

I received an email, another fairly recent one—I won't use the name—also from my riding, in Emsdale. That's just luckily to be considered northern Ontario for the purpose of this bill. "I'm currently 27 years of age, and currently reside in Emsdale, Ontario, in the township of Perry. I have been living in Emsdale for approximately three years now, and absolutely love everything about it. It is the gem of Canada, and I feel proud to tell people where I live." That is in the riding of Parry Sound—Muskoka, if I can editorialize some more.

"The reason I write to you today, Mr. Miller, is an ongoing concern of mine, and many other Canadians as well. I currently live in a two-bedroom, 900-square-foot home, which I rent, and my electricity bill is quite high. On average we have been paying \$350-plus a month. Last month was \$389, January was \$271...."

He goes through about six months, and says, "Payment due for March is \$908.

"That makes it a total of \$2,834 in seven months. Unfortunately the house is heated by electric (which we keep low, and wear sweaters). We use one or two lamps every day for the most part, and we only use the lights in rooms where needed, and shut them off after we leave. We try our best to be energy-conservative, but always get huge hydro bills. Just recently I received a notice on my bill telling me energy costs have gone up again. Hydro costs way too much. The hydro companies always seem to give people huge bills, even already having to pay \$400 a month for a two-bedroom home. The sad thing about this is that half the charges on my hydro bill are not actually electricity used. There is \$400 on my March bill just in charges," and he goes through some those charges.

"This is quite a concern of mine, because this month's hydro bill is more than my rent. I am currently unemployed due to being laid off in the month of November, and have been looking for work since. Since November I have put out well over 30 resumés, and have not got a job yet. My girlfriend has a job working for the Red Cross, and I stay home with our 21-month-old son. I have tried to get funding through government programs for schooling, but do not qualify for any." That was probably their Second Career program they were talking about. "I would love to start my own transportation business for people who have no means of transportation to go to appointments, (the elderly, cancer patients, and others) but do not have the funding or backing to start. We can't get a loan for a vehicle. The two vehicles we have are on their last legs, and my girlfriend needs hers for work (she does home care for Red Cross), and eventually so will I for work. We are certainly not swimming in debt. We walk the line, pay our bills on time and have great payment history with the companies we deal with (Hydro One, Bell Canada, and Primus Canada). My unemployment cheques are helping, but still just getting by. We are both hard-working and honest people who stay positive every day. We have our priorities in order, and try hard to save money, but unfortunately my whole ... cheque is going to Hydro One (\$577 biweekly...).

"I guess to sum this whole email up, I am saying hydro companies need to stop taking advantage of people. It is hard enough to keep a job these days, especially up here (Muskoka area) and at a decent pay.... I am having a hard time just finding one. A lot of Canadians such as myself feel the same way about hydro prices and charges."

Just one final email from the riding: "Good morning, Norm. I was shocked to receive a note from Hydro One announcing that they are going to try to levy another increase on delivery charges. Already our delivery/debt retirement/regulatory charges/GST (and soon HST) amount to half our \$196 monthly bill. I understand this increase will be \$4.78 per 1,000 kilowatt hours, which for me will be about \$10 per month since I use about 1,750 kilowatt hours (although I don't know how that's possible and am going to invite a representative to come and show me how...)"

At any rate, they are concerned about those increases; just to give you a bit of a sample of the many, many emails that I'm receiving from people who are concerned about increasing energy bills.

As I've pointed out, the actions of this government are definitely driving costs up. Some of the other members were talking about another bill—and I guess you're probably going to want a fair amount of time for this, I would think, energy critic?

Interjection.

Mr. Norm Miller: Yes, he says. So I will start to think about wrapping up soon, then.

I would like to talk briefly about, as the government members mentioned—even though it's not covered in this bill, Madam Speaker, the government members did talk about the industrial energy pricing that they're

proposing. I would simply say that they're going to need reduced industrial prices in northern Ontario because of the energy policies of this government, which are driving up electricity prices so that even though they talk about creating jobs, I think we are at a much greater risk of losing far more jobs because of the increasing energy costs. Even the way they're doing this industrial program for the north—which has not yet occurred. It's going to apply to big companies, so I'm hearing from smaller mills, those that are left in the north—because most of them have shut down. I'm hearing from smaller mills that use one megawatt of power, not five megawatts, so they won't qualify for that industrial program that's proposed. I have pointed out that I have companies in Muskoka; the dividing line set up by this government for northern programs is Parry Sound and north. So I have companies like Kimberly-Clark, which is in the forestry sector making tissue; Panolam, which is doing fibreboard; Tembec, doing hardwood flooring—all in Huntsville. Even if they use five megawatts of power—and I don't know whether they do or don't—they won't qualify for that northern program. But go 20 miles north and companies that are located there, if they're big enough, will qualify, so there's going to be this uneven playing field that the government is so good at setting up with their various acts, instead of having a level playing field.

1520

As I previously pointed out, there are lots of places that Mr. Yakabuski is going to speak about in his riding that won't qualify for this proposed energy credit. I think it's safe to say that it's hard to argue why Parry Sound should qualify—even though I represent Parry Sound—and Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke should not.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Part of my riding will: the district of Nipissing.

Mr. Norm Miller: Okay. I hear that part of it will.

In conclusion, as I pointed out, it's a relatively minor program: \$130 per year for an individual and \$200 for a family. I think all the various increases this government has brought about to do with energy cost, including the HST happening in July, are going to be much higher than the value you're going to get from this. And as I previously pointed out, it seems like a very bureaucratic and expensive way to administer it: They're actually going to send four cheques out each year, starting in 2011. Those cheques could be as little as \$10, as it is prorated, and it would be interesting to know just what it costs the government to administer the program and send out a cheque. I suspect it's more than \$50 per cheque.

With that, I think I've probably added enough comment, and I will pass it on to our energy critic, the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, who I see is writing his speech right now as I speak, now that he's back from Polish Constitution day.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you to my colleague from Parry Sound–Muskoka for speaking to the bill. This is actually a finance bill, but it deals with a specific rebate, if you want to call it that, for the purchase of energy. I guess I use the term “if you want to call it that,”

because it ain't very much. And as my colleague said: \$130 if you're an individual, and only if you're making \$35,000 or less—it drops down after that.

I wasn't able to go to the briefing because, as my colleague has intimated, I was gone to—actually, I was honoured to join the Speaker to lay a wreath in commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the Katyn massacre. I was honoured to be a part of that presentation with the Honourable Steve Peters, our Speaker. It's a beautiful day out there. We don't get outside very often when debates are on in this Legislature, but it is gorgeous out there. Actually, this morning I thought it was going to be raining this afternoon, but the sun is shining, and it's quite beautiful. For those people who are here, my thoughts are with you; you'll have to put up with it.

Anyhow, let's talk about this \$130 for an individual, if you're making \$35,000 or less, that then goes down until you get to \$48,000, I believe, and you get nothing. At \$47,000, you get \$10, and the government is going to spend \$20 to write that cheque. It's going to spend \$20 to write that cheque to send you a cheque for \$10. That's McGuinty economics.

Mr. Norm Miller: McGuinty math.

Mr. John Yakabuski: McGuinty math. They're going to spend \$20 to write a cheque for \$10. You see, it isn't the amount of money they're sending out; it's the thought. And the thought they want the public to have is, “My goodness, hasn't that Dalton McGuinty been kind to me.” They hope that the person who actually looks at that cheque somehow has this reaction of gratitude toward Dalton McGuinty. But what's going to happen—

Interjection: They don't have the Liberal logo on them.

Mr. John Yakabuski: My friend from Sault Ste. Marie says they don't have the Liberal logo on them. Well, I'm going to tell him something: He hasn't seen the cheques yet. Don't be too sure what kind of logo might be on those cheques, because you know that as we get nearer the election the games that get played get a little more obvious.

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, yes. They're going to be sending out these rebate cheques for some energy, hoping that people are going to say, “Oh, my. Who sent that to me?” And it will probably have the signature of one of the cabinet ministers on it, or maybe a picture of the cabinet minister.

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: The member for Peterborough says his picture could be on it. I'm not sure they'd go that far, but anything is possible in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario.

Anyway, a little bit of money in a big cheque—big message: “Vote Liberal.” That's what they're trying to do.

It's the same thing with the GST rebate. When people actually look at the value of that cheque—if you're a family, it's \$200 maximum, and it disappears, I believe, at \$65,000. If you're a family with five kids—not like my

family; I'm one of 14. We don't have many families like that anymore. Let's say they have a big family and they're getting back \$200—

Mr. Norm Miller: A year.

Mr. John Yakabuski: —a year on their hydro in four separate cheques—two this year, but every subsequent year it's four cheques, right? They're getting a little bit back, but how much more are they paying for that energy in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario? I can tell you this much: The price of electricity in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario is up 74% since 2003, when they were elected.

That doesn't talk about the HST you're going to be hit with. That doesn't talk about the increases in the distribution charges. That doesn't talk about the green tax; the smart meter program fees; the \$53-million backdoor energy tax; the bill that will be put on to your hydro bill; the \$437-million sweetheart Samsung deal.

What's going to happen when Hydro One has to go ahead with the \$1.6 billion or \$2 billion in transmission upgrades to accept all of the power that they're signing contracts on for 20 years—20-year contracts with large developers who are driven by profit. I know I sound like a New Democrat, just very temporarily. Those developers are not driven by an interest in saving the world. They're driven by an interest in making money. That's how business operates. If you can't make money, you can't stay in business.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: That's a good thing.

Mr. John Yakabuski: That's a good thing, of course. We have to make profits. They are driven by that. Yet the government is trying to somehow spread some ideological message that they're doing this because they're somehow committed to making Ontario better.

When I talk to people in my riding, they're concerned as to whether or not they're going to be able to pay their hydro bills. Every year we have more and more times when we have to actually call Hydro One on behalf of ratepayers, on behalf of electricity customers, and ask for some compassion, ask for some time so that a ratepayer can get through the winter or through some difficult times when they're maybe on layoffs or whatever, in order to pay their hydro bills.

It's becoming an increasingly challenging problem, and it's just going to get greater in McGuinty's Ontario, because they've done everything on the quick. They've put themselves in a box. They made a promise they couldn't keep. They made a promise in 2002 that they would shut down the coal plants by 2007. It was so ridiculous. There wasn't a single expert who agreed with them, but they said they had expert advice. When I challenged the Premier in the House to name one expert he consulted with on that policy—because there has to be some logic to doing something. You can't just make a promise and then hope that the tooth fairy comes along and makes it happen. You have got to be able to actually institute a program that works. When I challenged him on that, he wouldn't answer.

1530

Later that year in estimates, I asked the Minister of Energy, who was Dwight Duncan at the time, for the

names, and he said, "They'll be coming forward in the House." That was three and a half years ago and we're still waiting, because you know what? They don't exist. They invented that on politics and politics alone. Because of that, they put themselves into a corner, in a box, so they had to create a policy that kind of supported what they had promised. But the people who are paying for that are the energy customers. As a result of this government's so-called green energy initiatives, they're going to be paying a whole lot more without significantly affecting the amount of CO₂ produced in Ontario.

They had reductions in coal power usage last year, but Mother Nature took care of that. Why were they up so much in 2007? The government didn't say, "Oh, boy, we've fallen back on our plans," in 2007. No, the weather will dictate what the power demand is in the summer here in the province of Ontario.

They are bragging right now about their numbers and telling us how good they were in 2009. Well, when you had everybody laid off from their jobs across the province in manufacturing and otherwise, then of course the demand for electricity is going to go down. But as the economy begins to recover and we have a summer that all the prognosticators are saying is going to be a hot, dry one—well, we'll see what their numbers are like this summer. We'll see how committed they are. We'll see how honest they are about their policy when the numbers come back in September as to what happens this summer with power produced from fossil fuels. We'll see if it continues to decline. I know there's not a member over there who wants to stand up and put his seat on the line saying that they will, because they know they're not going to. They are going to go up this summer. You hear that, Madam Speaker? They'll go up this summer. They won't go down.

What are the Liberals going to do? Are they going to admit and say that they pulled a fast one? Are they going to admit that they misinformed people?

Mr. Glen R. Murray: No, it's called an environmental crisis.

Mr. John Yakabuski: They've got a crisis over there, Madam Speaker; there is no question about it. They have a crisis over there, and they are trying to export that crisis onto the backs of families and small businesses in this province. That's what they want to do with their crisis. They want to export that crisis onto the backs of the people who can least afford it.

Let's talk about their smart meter initiative. Here's how much they thought this out: I was talking to a constituent in my riding, an elderly person, who has—how do you say that? Chronic pulmonary obstructive disorder?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: COPD.

Mr. John Yakabuski: COPD, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. He has to be on oxygen 24/7. He's on a fixed old-age pension, the government pension—he didn't work for the government; no, it's the pension that comes from Canada pension. In the summertime, he has to have air conditioning because the humidity exacer-

bates his condition. What's going to happen to that man when they come in with their time-of-use pricing so that in the middle of the day, all summer long, when it's hottest and most humid and he needs the air conditioning most to allow him to breathe—not to allow him to go golfing or yachting or some of the stuff that maybe these cabinet ministers do on their free time, but to allow him to breathe. What's going to happen when he has to pay, off his meagre pension, hydro rates that are significantly higher than the other times of day because he has a so-called time-of-use smart meter?

Mr. Norm Miller: And he doesn't get this program.

Mr. John Yakabuski: He doesn't get this program because he's not in northern Ontario.

This is the way these people go about things on the other side of the House: They just decide that they're going to go with this policy because they like the politics of it, because some of their advisors, their deep thinkers in the ivory towers, have told them, "This is going to sell well with the latte crowd at Starbucks. They're going to like that." That, all of a sudden, becomes Liberal Party policy. That's how they get their policies. But they don't go out and ask Mr. Senior citizen who's suffering from COPD. They don't ask him how this is going to affect them. That's the kind of attitude they have: They know best. Why would Dalton McGuinty have to consult with people? He knows best. Just ask him. He'll tell you.

Look at what happened with the sex education fiasco. They have been working on this, apparently, for two years. They tell the world that they've been out consulting with everybody, but the minute the story hits the airwaves, the you-know-what hits the fan. Who did they consult with? Apparently not your average person, not the real parents who have real children going to real schools. They must have had those virtual parents with virtual children going to virtual schools. They never talked to the real people because as soon as the real people found out about it, they were tremendously upset that the government would go ahead with a policy like that without talking to them.

What is wrong with consulting with the public? Is there something wrong with talking to people and getting their views? Parents have a pretty good idea of how to raise their children, what they think is right for their children and what they think is best for their children. Unless you want to adopt all the children—is that McGuinty's plan? He's going to adopt everybody? It's going to be Daddy Dalton for everybody in the province? I don't know.

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Anyway, I pay heed to the member from Essex who is curious as to whether or not this is about Bill 44. I appreciate that he didn't rise on a point of order like his colleague from Mississauga normally does.

Mr. David Oraziotti: We know you're on message.

Mr. John Yakabuski: That's right. My friend from Sault Ste. Marie says we're on message.

This bill, let's just talk about my own riding for a second. It's interesting because this is a northern bill, and

my riding actually has a very small portion of it that is in northern Ontario according to where they draw the line, because it's in part of the district of Nipissing. My residents, a very small number of them who live in the hamlet of Madawaska and Whitney, they will actually be able to get some of this credit.

Oh, I want to make one thing clear. We're going to support the legislation because—

Interjections.

Mr. Norm Miller: We haven't caucused it yet. Come on.

Mr. John Yakabuski: We haven't caucused it? I thought—

Mr. Norm Miller: No, we didn't talk about it.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, okay. Well, maybe we're not. I have to talk to the finance critic, here.

But from the perspective that if you're going shopping, and you can't have the whole loaf of bread, but you're going to get a slice of it, I guess that's better than no bread at all. For the people that are going to get something from it, I don't oppose that.

But is it really meaningful? Does it really make up for what they're going to pay? This won't even cover the HST for some people, for goodness' sake. That won't even cover the HST on some people's hydro bills. It's sort of like giving with one hand and picking the pocket with the other. This government is sort of taking with one and giving with the other, giving with one and taking with the other, because they like the politics of the giving and because they want you to have a great deal of gratitude and be thankful to the government for something they've given you. But through one incremental bit at a time, they have been whacking the energy consumer in this province over the last few years.

1540

Tom Adams, who is a very, very learned person in the energy field, believes that energy prices will go up 25% in 2010 alone—25%. I'm going to ask you: Has anybody out there been getting a raise of 25%? Is anybody seeing their incomes rise 25%? But the Liberal government feels that they can take 25% more from you, and that's just the energy bills.

Every time people turn around—what about gasoline for their cars and trucks? I come from rural Ontario. Some of the members sitting there come from rural Ontario. They understand, but why are they not standing up to their Premier about what this is going to do to them, this HST on gasoline; what it's going to mean to those rural residents when they pull up to that pump on July 1, and the price of gas, for the sake of argument, if it was \$1 on June 30—\$1.08 on July 1? Talk about being kicked when you're down.

The HST already kicked in if you're buying a gym membership. We encourage people to be physically fit. We encourage people to take steps to join clubs so that they can exercise and maintain a level of physical fitness because most people believe that if you maintain a healthy level of physical fitness, you will require fewer, not more, health care dollars to be spent on you as you

grow older. Anyone can get critically ill, but for the most part, if you take care of yourself, that probably will be helpful to our health system.

What does the Liberal government do? They don't even wait till July 1 to whack you. You got that on May 1.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Why wait for spring? Do it now.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Why wait for spring? Do it now. HFC used to say that when they were giving out the home loans at about 32%: "Why wait for spring? Do it now." Household Finance; I remember that well.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Did you ever have a loan from them?

Mr. John Yakabuski: No, I never had a loan from Household Finance. I had a loan from daddy. His interest rates were better.

They go and whack you on May 1 if you buy a gym membership, or if you purchase airline tickets on which you travel after July 1. If you buy a golf membership and want to enjoy some summer recreation, you're getting hit now.

Now the government is talking about coming out with an industrial hydro policy as well. We'll have to see that as well, an industrial hydro policy, in another bill. They could have wrapped all of these up in schedules in the budgets, quite frankly, because they really have no agenda. They have no new legislation to bring forward. They hive this all off from the budget. They could have done it as part of the budget bill. They could have had it as part of the budget bill, but they wanted to bring it in separately.

Do you think they wanted to bring it separately because they wanted to listen to me debate this? Of course not. They wanted to bring it in separately because they wanted to be able to try to play the politics of this issue. That's all it's about. That's what it has gotten down to in the last 15, 16 months of their term here in the province of Ontario: Every bill that's coming forward now is motivated by the politics, not motivated by, is it a good thing for the people, is it something that is absolutely necessary, is it something that needs its own piece of legislation in order to be enacted? No. It's about, how are we going to be able to message this and spin this to the people and try and get more people to be on our side?

Mr. Bruce Crozier: You would never do that.

Mr. John Yakabuski: That is kind of cynical because I would never do that.

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: The member for Essex made the statement, "You would never do that" to me, and I'm simply agreeing with him. You're right.

Mr. Bruce Crozier: And I'm being cynical.

Mr. John Yakabuski: No, no, but he is being facetious, most likely.

You have to ask yourself, what are we doing here? What are we doing here in this Legislature if we're bringing forth legislation that could have been dealt with in another way? And then, when we should have legislation, like we should have had to deal with the \$53-million backdoor energy tax, as the C.D. Howe Institute

has said, which is taxation by regulation, which is illegal under our constitution—it's just a matter of time before someone challenges the constitutionality of that move—when they should have had legislation brought before this House to be debated, they chose not to. They chose not to bring a piece of legislation on a \$53-million backdoor energy tax—terrible. People as reputable and non-partisan as the C.D. Howe Institute have said, "That's illegal." I guess it's going to be up to someone to decide whether or not they're going to challenge the constitutionality of it, but the C.D. Howe Institute says that this government is guilty of doing something illegal with that \$53-million backdoor energy tax.

And they're not done; they're not done. That adds \$4 or so to your energy bill. They're not done. We know that we caught them; we caught them in the hearings on Bill 235 because we asked the question of the gas companies, if they had had discussions with the government about the government inflicting a tax on them, making the gas companies the tax collectors as well. Well, that's going to be a \$100-million tax. They couldn't get it in before the end of the last fiscal year, ending on March 31, 2010, but they fully intend to whack you with that one in fiscal 2010-11. That's another \$100-million tax that will be on your natural gas bills in the province of Ontario, which they are going to try to put through by regulation and not legislation—again, something that, according to the C.D. Howe Institute, is patently illegal.

Where does this leave the energy consumer in the province of Ontario? Well, they're making sure that in the north they have what they purport to be a good news story, that you're going to get a little bit back on your energy bill. Nobody is going to refuse a cheque from the government, because even as badly as Dalton McGuinty has run this province, the cheque from the government still doesn't bounce, so it's a good cheque. They're going to be happy to get that cheque from the government. What they're not happy about is how much more the government continues to take from them.

But in the rest of the province—and there are low-income people in the rest of the province, under \$35,000, who are struggling every day with their hydro bills. Where's the program for them? Where's the plan for them? I guess the government didn't feel that it was something they could get a political win out of, and if they couldn't get a political win out of it, they weren't going to go ahead with it. Why is there not a plan for low-income Ontarians all around the province who are paying the ridiculous increases in energy costs as a result of this government's energy policies? Should there not be a rebate for them? Should there not be something paying them back for what's being taken from them?

I hope everybody out there examines their hydro bills. Go back and look at your hydro bills from a few years ago and see what you were paying. Ask yourself, how much more does this government think you can pay? They're very sly in the way they do it. They don't hit you with a 40% increase; no, it's a 5% increase and a 4% increase and an 8% increase and a 7% increase. But

sooner or later—I know we all know the story about the straw that broke the camel's back. They are stretching the ability of the taxpayers' camel in this province to the nth degree. There is not a whole lot more that people can take. Every time they turn around—today I'm just talking about increases in energy costs. But every other fee and every other tax is going up.

1550

The other day I was here and the revenue minister was telling people to pre-book their funeral before July 1. Well, I happened to ask one of the funeral directors how much that would cost me. It was not insignificant. It was in the thousands of dollars. I asked the revenue minister, for those people who are having a hard time paying their property taxes under Dalton McGuinty, having a hard time paying their increases in auto insurance this year under Dalton McGuinty, where are they supposed to come up with maybe \$5,000 to pre-book a funeral to save the HST? That was the advice of the revenue minister: Just pre-book your funeral. Maybe he'd like to help them out. Maybe he'd like to cut a cheque to help those folks out in pre-booking their funeral, because not everybody has that kind of money sitting around just waiting to invest in pre-booking a funeral.

Mr. Jeff Leal: It's prepaid, not pre-booked.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Pre-booked, prepaid; what's the difference?

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes, that's true.

Mr. Jeff Leal: If you're pre-booked, are you giving us a date?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, I'm not pre-booking mine, but I'd be prepared to pre-book others'.

Anyway, I have to accept the correction of the members from Algoma-Manitoulin and Peterborough. Yes, it's prepay your funeral. I guess you wouldn't want to pre-book your funeral. So there is a difference. I misspoke, and I'd like to correct my record, that yes, it is to prepay your funeral.

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Perhaps the member from Peterborough wants to talk about prepaying funerals and how much HST they're going to pay after July 1 if they don't prepay that funeral, how much it's going to hit them on that—

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: —depending upon what level of funeral you choose, I say to the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock. We don't know what funeral you're prepaying yet.

Mr. Rick Johnson: It's 8%.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's 8%; that's right. But if you buy the basic, it might be 8% of one figure; whereas if you're buying the better one, it's going to be 8% of a higher figure.

Getting back to the bill—because, believe it or not, I'm running out of time—my colleague from Parry Sound went on longer than I had expected.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Or the Polish embassy thing went on too long.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes, I was there. The ambassador was there as well, I say to my friend from Timmins-James Bay.

The member for Timmins-James Bay, I must say I was disappointed to hear that your private member's bill that actually would have helped the north, I believe, didn't go through on Thursday here in this House. This bill, Bill 44, is a lot of paper, but it's not going to amount to a whole lot. It's not going to amount to anything significant to the electricity consumers in northern Ontario. But I do think that the member from Timmins-James Bay had a good suggestion on Thursday, and the government wouldn't support it.

I've got a good suggestion for Thursday, too. In my last couple of minutes I want to remind the members of this House that they will have an opportunity to stand up for rural Ontario this Thursday, because once again we will be debating my gas tax fairness bill.

Here's the fundamental issue: I think that anybody who looks at this from a logical point of view is going to say, how could you take a tax from all people and only give it to some based on where they live and what kind of a transit system they have in their communities? The gas tax in the province of Ontario is dealt with completely differently than it is by the federal government. The federal government gives a gas tax rebate to all municipalities, but here in Ontario, in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario, they don't give that gas tax rebate to rural communities. They only give it to those that have a public transportation system.

Rural people pay a greater percentage of their disposable income than urban people do on gasoline, because by our very nature we have to drive to get to places. We don't have the option of taking the GO train, the subway or the buses. You have to get into your vehicle and drive.

There is going to be an opportunity for these members on the Liberal side of the House to stand up for gas tax fairness so that a portion of that gas tax would then be rebated to all communities so that they could devote it to the priority transit programs in their communities. In some communities, it's going to be buses, but in another community, it might be streets, roads or bridges, because they don't have a public transportation system. It is going to be an opportunity, on this Thursday, in my private member's time, for members on the opposite side of the House to do just that.

I hope those rural members will stand up for rural people and their constituencies as well, because your people will benefit. Not just the people of Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, but everyone in the province of Ontario will benefit equally, based on the number of inhabitants they have in their community and the kilometrage of roads they maintain. This is an opportunity for fairness, coming up Thursday. I hope the members on the opposite side of the House will support that.

And you're going to have to think about this one: \$10 cheques that cost \$20 to write, and you're still going to

be doing that if somebody makes \$47,000. There should be a better, streamlined way of getting the money to consumers. You could start by stopping with the hosing you're giving them on the hydro rates, to begin with. If you weren't so ridiculous in the rates you're charging, you wouldn't have to offer a rebate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): Questions and comments?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I just want to make a few comments in regard to what I heard from both the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka and the member from—

Mr. John Yakubuski: Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: —Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. The reason I would never be the Speaker of the House is, after 20 years, I can't get all those ridings straight. I know you by name.

Mr. John Yakubuski: That's the only reason.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: That's the only reason, because I know you all by name. You're good friends and stuff, but your ridings escape me.

I just want to say the members are right: If the government is putting out this 25% savings to industry as the thing that's going to save all the jobs in northern Ontario, I just want to say, boy, you got a long ways to go to figure that one out.

Just recently, we saw Xstrata in Timmins—after we sat down with the Premier—and we said, “Listen, the government has offered up a 25% saving. Is that at least a beginning? Is that even a wedge to get you to change your minds about staying in Ontario?” They said, “Energy prices now and in the future will continue to rise, and we do not see Ontario as a place that is competitive when it comes to electricity prices.”

I just want to say to the members, I agree that, yes, 25% is a step in the right direction. Nobody's going to say 25% is something to sneeze at. But please don't put it out there as being the thing that's going to save all those jobs in northern Ontario.

I've got to take this opportunity because he spoke on my private member's bill. I was here during the debate, obviously; it was my bill. I was extremely disappointed in the result of that vote. I would have thought that government members would have stepped forward. Unfortunately, they didn't step forward to support that bill. Northern members could have gotten up in the House and spoken for it or against it. They didn't do that, the Liberal members. They decided, by and large, to be absent from the vote and be absent from the debate. That is their choice; I understand. But I've got to say to the members across the way, the seeds that you sow will be the ground that you've got to hoe in the next election. I can tell you, you didn't help yourselves by not supporting northern Ontario last Thursday.

1600

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): The member from Algoma–Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I'm kind of interested in the speeches made by the energy critic for the official opposi-

tion and the finance critic for the official opposition. I'm kind of waiting to understand whether they are for or against this energy credit. There seems to be some discrepancy over there. I'm just going to speak for one second about what we are really talking about, because I think they wandered a bit in their conversation here.

What this actually does is provide northern residents who are age 18 and older, who pay rent or property tax for their principal residence—they would be eligible for an annual credit. A single person would be eligible for a credit of up to \$130, while a family would be eligible for \$200, including single parents. This credit would benefit about one quarter of a million families and single people, or more than half of northern residents, providing about \$35 million in assistance for the first year of implementation. It would be available—and I know these members are interested in this—to people across the north: to residents of the districts of Algoma, Cochrane, Kenora, Manitoulin, Nipissing, Parry Sound, Rainy River, Sudbury, Thunder Bay and Timiskaming. People living on northern reserves who incur residential energy costs would also be eligible for the credit. To help those who need it most, the credit would be income-tested; it would be reduced for a single person with an adjusted net income over \$35,000 and eliminated when his or her income exceeds \$48,000. It would be reduced for families with an adjusted family net income of over \$45,000 and eliminated when their income is more than \$65,000.

This will help my constituents; it will help the people of the north. It is one more measure where this government recognizes the unique opportunity—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): Thank you. The member from Leeds–Grenville.

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm pleased to provide just a few comments in response to the very, very eloquent addresses from the members for Parry Sound–Muskoka and Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke in regard to Bill 44. I know that when I've spoken before in this House, in the short time that I've been here, I've talked about what I've heard from people when I've been on the election campaign. They just went to the polls in my riding on March 4. I can appreciate—

Mr. John Yakubuski: What a win.

Mr. Steve Clark: Thank you, honourable sir.

Mr. John Yakubuski: Was it 68%?

Mr. Steve Clark: It was 66%, but thank you for bringing it up.

I can appreciate that Bill 44 is a northern Ontario bill and speaks to those in northern Ontario. However, having just been to the polls, having just talked to people in my constituency, the cost of energy—the energy bills that people are getting in my riding, not just residential bills but also the commercial bills, have just been unbelievable. I think it was the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke who talked about the cost of energy. Since this government came into power, it has increased 74%—shameful. That doesn't include anything about smart

meters or about the green tax. I worked in a constituency office. This is a huge issue.

Just before my time runs out, I want to talk about someone who I met during the campaign. His name is Ed Lypchuk. He lives on Meighen Crescent in Brockville. He wrote a wonderful editorial: "Hydro Pricing Schedule Great for Vampire Lifestyle." Mr. Lypchuk talked about the fact that he's going to lead a double life as a senior vampire. Not only is this government causing him grief with the HST, but the fact that the government should realize that he will not be a blood-sucking vampire like this government, but one who will be gentle. I wanted to put those comments on record—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): Thank you. The member for Kenora–Rainy River.

Mr. Howard Hampton: I'm pleased to be able to offer some comments on the speeches given by my two colleagues in the Conservative Party. While New Democrats do not agree with the Conservative approach in respect to many areas of energy policy, I do want to give my colleague the energy critic for the Conservative Party credit for actually dealing with the numbers. I sat here earlier this afternoon and I listened to the two principal spokespersons for the government who talked about mines, they talked about medical schools, they talked about highways, but they didn't talk about the bill, and there's a reason they don't want to talk about the bill: The reason is because the hydro bill and the heating bill in Ontario are skyrocketing, and then when the government puts the HST on the heating bill and the hydro bill, they're going to skyrocket even more. People who are already having a hard time paying the heating bill and the hydro bill are going to have an even tougher time. When you add in the little bit that this bill, this energy credit, will put on the table—

Mr. John Yakabuski: A pittance.

Mr. Howard Hampton: It is a pittance compared to how much people's hydro bills and heating bills are increasing. Pensioners, people living on low incomes, people living on modest incomes and, I can say, most First Nation residents in this province have no idea how they're going to pay their hydro bill or their heating bill, even with this so-called northern energy credit. That's why government members wouldn't talk about the bill. The member for Timiskaming wouldn't talk about it. The member for Pickering wouldn't talk about it. I at least give the Conservatives credit for talking about the real numbers and how much they're going to hurt ordinary people in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): The member has two minutes to sum up.

Mr. Norm Miller: Thank you to the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke for sharing the time, and I'm pleased to have comments from the members from Timmins–James Bay, Leeds–Grenville, Algoma–Manitoulin and Kenora–Rainy River.

I think the member from Kenora–Rainy River did sum up that this bill is really a pittance when you see the sorts of energy rate increases that we are seeing in the

province of Ontario. As the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke pointed out, that's a 74% increase since the McGuinty government was elected, and we haven't even seen the most recent increases that are coming: the 10% just approved by the Ontario Energy Board, the 8% HST, and on and on it goes.

Why was this bill not just a part of the budget bill, Bill 16, that's in committee right now? It has some 31 schedules, and this is fairly thin, dealing with one very specific issue; that is, these tax credits for northern residents. So I do ask the government why they didn't just make it part of the bill that's in committee, although they have time-allocated that bill in committee, so there's not really going to be much time for people to be looking at it.

The unfortunate thing is that all residents in the province of Ontario are going to see their energy bills go up and their hydro bills go up, but it's only residents of northern Ontario who will get this \$130 if you're an individual to a maximum of \$230 if you're a family—and then going down, as we pointed out. There will be many northern residents who will receive as little as \$10 four times a year through this bill that is proposed.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Howard Hampton: I'm pleased to be able to take part in this debate, if for no other reason than to clear away some of the smoke and some of the fog that members of the McGuinty government have tried to create around this bill.

I noted earlier that I heard the two principal government spokespersons this afternoon speak for almost an hour, and they hardly spoke about the bill. The bill is called "northern energy credit," and I expected that I would hear some thoughtful, detailed discussion about the bill. I heard almost nothing. I heard somebody talk about highways. I heard somebody talk about the medical school. I heard somebody talk about the Ring of Fire. I heard somebody talk about a courthouse in Thunder Bay. I heard all kinds of stuff, but none of it related to this bill. If I were a reasonable person at home, I suppose I might wonder, "Well, why won't members of the government, Liberal members, talk about this bill?"

I want people to know why they won't talk about it, although I think most people, especially people in northern Ontario, are smart enough to do the math for themselves and to make their way through the smokescreen. The reason government members do not want to talk about this bill is because if they do talk about this bill and they don't talk about courthouses, they don't talk about highways, they don't talk about a medical school, they don't talk about the Ring of Fire, what they have to admit is that hydro bills in this province, especially in northern Ontario, have skyrocketed through the roof under the McGuinty Liberals, and what they have to admit is that for people who have electric heat—and sad to say, there are too many people who have electric heat—their heating bill has skyrocketed. We've all seen the price of oil. People who have to heat their homes with fuel oil,

and many in rural Ontario and northern Ontario do, their heating bills have skyrocketed, but the McGuinty Liberals don't want to admit that.

1610

They don't want to admit that there are literally hundreds of thousands of people in the province, I would venture to say probably a million, who have trouble every month paying those bills. They don't want to admit that pensioners—I can tell you, because I get the calls from pensioners in my constituency offices; pensioners who call and say, “My hydro bill is \$250 a month. I'm living on a pension that's a little over \$1,000 a month. I don't know how I'm going to pay this.” The same pensioner gets a heating bill in that range. So they go through this very difficult, painful process of trying to decide, do you pay the hydro bill, do you pay the heating bill and do you have a little bit left over for food?

It's not just pensioners. People who are forced to rely upon Ontario disability support benefits or Ontario Works benefits—many people are under the mistaken assumption that there's a place in the Ontario disability support benefit or the Ontario Works benefit that pays for the heating and electricity bill. Not so; not so. The McGuinty Liberals will pat themselves on the back and say, “Oh, boy, people who have to rely on Ontario Works or the Ontario disability support benefit got a 1% increase”—a 1% increase—“in their benefit this year.” Hydro bills, by independent analysts, are going to go up by in excess of 20%. The heating bill is going up and other bills are going up.

People who have to struggle on very low incomes have no idea how they're going to pay these bills. I can tell you that a lot of working people have no idea, but the government doesn't want to talk about that. They especially don't want to talk about the fact that on top of the increases in the bill, they're then going to load on the 8% HST, which will make it even more unaffordable for ordinary folks. So the government will talk about courthouses, they'll talk about highways, they'll talk about medical schools and they'll talk about the Ring of Fire. They'll talk about anything but this bill. Well, I am going to speak about this bill. I'm going to speak about it in detail.

I, from time to time, do surveys in my own constituency on people's hydro bills. The average hydro bill in my part of northern Ontario is now in excess of \$200 a month. Many people are paying hydro bills of \$300, \$400 and \$500 a month. Let's take the average: \$200 a month times 12 is \$2,400 a year for the hydro bill.

Now, an independent expert—his name is Bruce Sharp—at Aegent Energy Advisors says that just what the McGuinty government is doing this year is going to push up people's hydro bills by another \$377. It is \$2,400 a year now. When you add it all up, add on another \$377, almost \$400: so \$2,800.

Then the McGuinty government's going to put on the HST. I'll give them the benefit of the doubt. I'll knock it down to \$2,700. What's 10% of \$2,700? \$270. What's 8%? Let's knock it down to say \$240. The HST is going

to add another \$240 onto people, and that's only part of it. People in my constituency who are forced to rely upon oil heat are paying heating bills of \$500 or \$600 a month. People who are forced to rely on electric heat are paying even more than that. People who have natural gas, they might get a break. They might be paying, oh, \$120 a month. Add it up: 10 months, \$1,200; another two months, \$1,440. Take 10%: \$144. Knock it down a little for 8%: \$120. Add the figures up. You don't have to be a mathematician to know that those folks are looking at paying well over \$300 in taxes on top of the other bill increases—taxes due to the HST.

This government says that this bill is going to make it better for people. Well, if the bill is going to go up by \$377 because of rate increases and so-called smart meters—although there seems to be nothing smart about them. They add \$2 billion in cost to the electricity system but don't deliver us any benefit. So there's a \$377 increase to the bill, and then you're going to tack on the HST. Man, all in—heating bill, hydro bill, HST—you're talking about taking an extra \$500 out of people's pockets when you add it all up. Now, do I see a credit here of \$500 to make a difference?

Interjection: No.

Mr. Howard Hampton: Do I see even a credit here of \$400?

Interjection: No.

Mr. Howard Hampton: Do I see even a credit here of \$300?

Interjection: No.

Mr. Howard Hampton: You don't have to pass even grade 8 math to figure out that the McGuinty Liberals are going to take \$500 out of the pockets of some of the lowest-income people in Ontario. Yes, they'll give them \$200 back, and then they're going to try to say to them that it's a good deal. Any time somebody takes \$500 out of your right pocket, gives you \$200 back in the left pocket and says it's a good deal, it ain't a good deal. You've been ripped off to the tune of \$300 a year, and that's what's happening. It's happening to pensioners, it's happening to the lowest-income people in Ontario, it's happening to modest-income families, and it's happening to First Nations.

Let me tell you what's happening on the 55 First Nations that I know of in my part of northern Ontario. Most of them are in my constituency, but not all. Do you know, Speaker, that individual First Nation families are having such a difficult time paying their hydro bill—just leave the heating bill aside for a minute—that the community has to step in and use the limited community funds, funds that would otherwise go to education, health, recreation or housing? The community has to step in and pay people's hydro bill because they can't pay it themselves.

This government is going to drive up those bills even higher. Then it has the audacity to say to people that this bill is going to be a good deal for them. All it does is create some fog and smoke to try to cover up what's really happening. People are going to be struggling more

than ever. People are going to have a harder time than ever paying their bills.

This is not like the jewellery bill; this is not like the entertainment bill where I can forego it for a while. These are essentials. Heating the house between October and April in northern Ontario is not some optional thing. It's not like deciding whether or not to go to the jewellery store. Let me tell you, having electricity is not some optional thing. It's not like deciding whether or not you're going to go to the casino for the day. These are essential things. If the government doesn't think it's essential, I invite government members to shut off the electricity in your refrigerator for a couple of days and try eating the food and see what happens to you.

1620

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Looks like my fridge.

Mr. Howard Hampton: These are essentials. These things matter for people's lives and people's health, yet this government is driving up what people are going to pay at an astronomical rate, and then has the audacity to come in and present this bill and say it's a good deal.

I say again: I do not know—even with this modest \$100, perhaps up to \$200—how a lot of people in northern Ontario are going to pay their hydro bill and their heating bill when all of these increases in the bill and the HST take effect.

This government has made a game of trying to hide the cost of the HST from people. The government knows the figures. The government knows, for example, how much electricity is consumed in northern Ontario. So if you attach the HST to that, you can very quickly figure out how much the HST is going to bring in. We had to do this by freedom of information. We had to write to the government over and over again and ask for the figures and go through the appeal process and everything else because the McGuinty government didn't want this information out there.

With the 8% HST tax on the hydro bill, this government will take in another \$425 million a year, and with the HST on the heating bill, the estimate is that we'll take in another \$356 million a year. This is why the government members didn't want to talk about this bill. They didn't want to talk about the fact that people who are already struggling, who are already having a hard time, who have to choose sometimes between putting food on the table and paying the heating bill or putting food on the table and paying the hydro bill—this government is going to take another \$800 million out of their pockets by taxing something that is absolutely essential for people to live, given the climate that we live in here. That's why the government didn't want to talk about it.

This is going to take a significant amount of money—almost \$800 million more—out of the pockets of folks across the province. The government, yes, brings forward this energy credit, but the energy credit is not going to be anywhere near the \$800 million that's going to be taken out of people's pockets.

I want people to understand that that's why the New Democrats think the HST is the wrong tax at the wrong

time, but to put it on people's hydro bills and put it on their heating bills is absolutely wrong—an absolutely wrong-headed policy and a wrong step to take. This bill, this northern energy credit, is not going to come anywhere near undoing the damage that this government is going to do, both through rate increases on the hydro bill and then finally by putting the HST on the hydro bill.

I want to dwell on First Nation communities for a minute, because here's where the situation is getting very tragic. A lot of homes in First Nation communities were built with electric heat. That was a decision that was made by the Department of Indian Affairs in Ottawa. In some cases, that decision was made 15, 25, 30 years ago. Many of them were built with electric heat.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: There's no natural gas there.

Mr. Howard Hampton: Natural gas is not an option. Trucking in fuel is incredibly expensive, so they made the decision to go with electric heat.

Given the rate increases, given the increases in the hydro bill, what this means now for many First Nation communities is that it's not unusual for people to have hydro bills that are \$800, \$900 a month. That's not unusual. No wonder the chief and council have to use the community budget that is intended for education or health care or intended to build housing or for recreation—no wonder they have to step in and use those limited funds just to help people pay their hydro bills. People simply don't have that income, and First Nations are going to be hit by these staggering increases.

I have no idea how not only the individual families are going to be able to pay the hydro bill but how the First Nation council will be able to pay the hydro bill. I would have thought the government members would have gotten up today and maybe alluded to that hardship. Not for a second. They talked about highways, courthouses, the Ring of Fire and medical schools, but not one second of attention to the pain, the struggle, the difficulty that all kinds of people, especially First Nation families, are having now trying to pay the hydro bill because so many of the homes were built with electric heat, which brings me to the other part of this which is missing.

I was looking, just this past week, at Manitoba. Manitoba has electricity rates which are much lower than what you see here in Ontario. Both the residential rate and the industrial rate are much lower, so people are not facing hydro bills of \$200, \$300, \$400 or \$800 a month. People might be facing a hydro bill of maybe \$100 at most.

But Manitoba, even with those much lower electricity rates and much lower hydro bills, if you read, has a very thoughtful and attractive proposal for people. They're very interested, for a variety of reasons, some of them environmental; some of them to do with how they want to strategically locate the province in terms of its economy in the future; some of it in terms of how much money they can make selling electricity contracts to Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wisconsin—for a variety of reasons, the province of Manitoba has a very thoughtful, deliberate strategy to help people actually use

not only less electricity in their homes but less heating oil, less natural gas, less energy overall.

They have a strategy where they will provide you with a low-interest loan and a grant so that you can purchase energy-efficient appliances. If you've got an old freezer, an old fridge, an old stove—and by and large, older appliances use a lot more electricity than the most modern and energy-efficient ones. That province actually provides people with grants and loans so that people can purchase the energy-efficient freezer, fridge or stove. You use less electricity and you pay back the loan based upon how much you save each month on your hydro bill. If you save \$30 a month on your hydro bill because you're using a lot less electricity, that becomes the payment on the loan. So \$30 a month, 12 months, \$360 a year, five years—almost \$1,600. Chances are that you'll have paid for, or be close to paying for, that new energy-efficient fridge, and nothing has come out of your pocket. After it's paid off, people get to put the \$30 or \$35 a month that they're saving on their hydro bill in their pocket.

But it's not just with respect to electricity; it's also with respect to heating. If you want to put in a very high-efficiency natural gas furnace; if you want to replace the doors, the windows and upgrade the insulation in your house so that you use less heating energy, this Manitoba strategy does that as well.

1630

Once again, you pay the loan back based on how much you save every month on your heating bill. So if you save \$25 or \$30 a month on your heating bill, times 12—\$360 a year—over four, five or six years, you pay back the loan. That is a real strategy to help people. It's good for the environment, good for people's pocketbooks and good for the long-term interests of the province.

Now, do we see any strategy like this from the McGuinty government? I had my assistant look at the Ministry of Energy website: nothing. I had my assistant look at the Ontario Power Authority website: nothing. I had my assistant look at the Ministry of the Environment website: nothing. I had my assistant look at the Ministry of Finance website: nothing.

It would seem that the McGuinty Liberals' definition of helping people on their hydro bills and their heating bills is to force the bills sky high and then say to people who are going to have the highest bills, "Here, we'll give you a \$200 credit." But the credit comes nowhere near the increase, whether the increase is through rate changes, whether it's through so-called smart meters that aren't very smart, whether it's through other fees and commissions that have been added to the bill or whether it's the HST.

I would much rather see a strategy like Manitoba's, where you actually provide people with the tools, the incentive and the financial help so that they use less electricity, so that they use less heating fuel. It will be good for the environment, it will be good for their pocketbooks, and do you know what? It will be good for the long-term interests of the province too. But we don't see anything like that with this bill.

Just for the people at home, because I know the members of the government didn't want to talk about the details very much, the maximum benefit a family could get out of this bill, if your income is \$45,000 a year or less, is \$200. Meanwhile, as I've already pointed out, the hydro bill and the heating bill are going up by \$400 or \$500 a year. If you're a single person and your income is \$35,000 a year or less, the maximum you're going to get is \$130. Meanwhile, your hydro bill and heating bill, when you tack on the HST and everything else, is going up by \$500 a year. Clearly, by anybody's arithmetic, this is not a good deal.

Now, because government members delved into this, I feel a responsibility to speak to it, because some government members wanted to use this bill to talk about the northern industrial hydro rate. Once again, government members want to pretend that the northern industrial hydro rate they have outlined in the budget is going to be the be-all and end-all. Well, I would say to folks across northern Ontario, particularly industrial users of electricity: Read the fine print carefully. The reason people should read the fine print carefully is because, in effect, the industrial hydro bill now consists of a few things. The industrial hydro bill consists of the hydro rate for electricity, then there's transmission, then there's debt retirement and then there's something called the global adjustment formula.

When I talk to the few paper mills and pulp mills that are still running in northern Ontario—and I say that with sadness because there are few running; the vast majority have been shut down under this government and they've been shut down because this government has followed a policy of driving the industrial hydro rate through the roof, which has an especially detrimental effect on paper mills—they will say to you: "Well the big thing that's really killing us now is this global adjustment." This global adjustment, in some cases, is adding close to a million a month.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It's \$2 million.

Mr. Howard Hampton: In Mr. Bisson's case, for the paper mill in his riding, it's adding \$2 million a month to the hydro bill.

Now, is this northern industrial power rate going to do anything about the global adjustment, which is the biggest headache that industrial processors and manufacturers in northern Ontario have now? Is it going to do anything about it? No, it isn't. The single biggest headache that paper mills, pulp mills, mining operations, smelting, refining operations are facing on their hydro bills now in northern Ontario, the global adjustment figure which is skyrocketing out of sight—what the McGuinty government is proposing in its northern Ontario hydro rate isn't going to do a thing about that; nothing about it. It's like having a mammoth headache, and the government comes up to you and says, "Here, take this bit of penicillin. It will fix it." Anybody who thinks about it knows that a penicillin pill won't do anything about a headache. Well, doing a little bit of adjustment to the industrial hydro rate is not going to do

anything when the big issue facing manufacturers and processors and paper mills in northern Ontario right now is not the hydro rate; it's the huge skyrocketing explosion of the global adjustment figure.

I would say—and I know the government has promoted this with all kinds of hype—to most manufacturers in northern Ontario, “Read the fine print.” But I already know they're reading the fine print. I already know that. I've had paper mill managers say to me, “If the government had done this five years ago it would have made a difference.” But what they've done is they've allowed the industrial hydro rates to skyrocket and they've done other things to allow the global adjustment part of the bill to skyrocket, so now this little bit, this two cents per kilowatt hour, is not going to much in terms of what companies are facing.

The companies can also see down the road. As Mr. Sharp at Aegent Energy Advisors has indicated, companies know that other things that are happening. Other things that are being done by this government are going to continue to drive the industrial hydro bill higher and higher over the next two years. What happens three years from now when this special northern industrial hydro rate comes off? Companies will be faced with a hydro bill that skyrockets. Again, companies aren't in the business of only looking one or two years down the road. They want to know, where are we going to be in three years? Where are we going to be in five years? Where are we going to be in seven years? They know that as a result of some of the things this government is doing, in fact even with this northern industrial hydro rate, when it comes off in three years companies will be facing an even more difficult time paying the hydro bills. Just look at some of the headlines in the local paper. The *Toronto Star*, April 10: “Electricity Price Rises a Concern to Industry.” The *Globe and Mail* on the same day: “Energy Plan Called Threat to Industry's Edge.” Companies see this, and they know that something that is a three-year temporary fix is just too little and, as I said, it's too late.

1640

This has very real repercussions. There's a paper mill in Thunder Bay, Cascades paper mill, that has been shut down now for, I guess, three and a half years. When I talk to people, I say, “Look, what would it cost to start up that mill?” They say, “Based upon what I've seen, you'd probably need about \$50 million of working capital.” You'd have to get the machines all shipshape again, and you'd have to make sure that your steam and energy systems and electronic systems are going to run. Then, of course, you'd have to purchase some raw material. And then you'd have to have some money to recall your workers and pay them. So \$50 million is probably what it'll cost. I don't know too many people who are going to put \$50 million down on the table for something that's only going to be a temporary plan—because you're not going to make the \$50 million back in three years.

Similarly, the government wants to say that this is going to lead to all kinds of new investment. Well, let's just take the mining industry. We've had a new diamond

mine, the Victor mine, open in northeastern Ontario, in my colleague Mr. Bisson's riding. Many people think that this diamond mine, which just opened a few years ago, is something recent. What they need to understand is that De Beers, the company that developed the mine, was working on that for almost 15 years. That didn't happen in one year or two years or three years. It was a 15-year project to bring that mine into production. So if it takes 10 or 15 years of advanced exploration, financing, approvals, permits, construction to bring something like that into production, when a government puts down a three-year temporary industrial hydro fix, it has almost no effect whatsoever on that company. They're thinking in terms of a 15-year planning horizon, and somebody says, “Oh, I'll give you a deal—not a very good deal. I'll give you a deal that lasts three years,” it has no impact, no effect whatsoever—none.

I would say very clearly that while the government has put a lot of hype into this, while the government has spent a lot of time promoting the concept of the northern Ontario industrial hydro rate since the budget, the fact of the matter is that it is not going to reduce the existing hydro rate substantially, or even significantly. The fact of the matter is that for industrial manufacturers and processors in northern Ontario, the biggest addition to the hydro bill has been the skyrocketing global adjustment. This special industrial hydro rate for northern Ontario is not going to do anything about the global adjustment figures and how badly they've been exploding. It doesn't offer enough of an opportunity even to bring a paper mill that has been sidelined, a paper mill that's not operating, back into operation. And it's not going to have any effect on longer-term things like the mining industry, because those projects typically take 10 or 15 years of hard work to get into production. Something like a three-year special industrial hydro rate for northern Ontario is not going to have any effect on something that has a 10- or 15-year planning horizon.

That then brings up the question, what's this thing about? I'll tell you what it's about. The fact of the matter is, now that we have set election dates in Ontario, the election campaign is really five or six months long. The next election campaign is not going to begin in September 2011. This Legislature, in the spring of 2011, will probably recess in June, and then the election campaign will get under way. The election campaign will go all through June, July, August and September and into October. What it means is that one year from now—12 and a half months from now, essentially—Ontario is going to be in its next full-speed-ahead, damn-the-torpedoes, full-fledged election campaign. This announcement in this budget has more to do with that than anything else.

There are about two or three forest industry complexes that are really in big trouble right now. The Abitibi-Bowater mill in Thunder Bay used to be a beautiful operation. It had a softwood kraft mill, a hardwood kraft mill, three big, fast paper machines and some other things as well. The hardwood kraft mill is now shut down. Two of the paper machines are shut down. You've basically

got the softwood kraft mill and one paper machine, which are struggling to survive. This government is very worried that between now and the next election that may shut down, which would mean essentially the whole forest industry in the Thunder Bay area will be shut down.

I would suggest to you that this announcement of a special industrial hydro rate, that isn't really going to do much, has more to do with trying to just quiet things down for the next 12 months, between now and the next election, than it does anything else.

There's another forest industry complex in the riding of the Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry, in Terrace Bay, that is facing a similar problem: Terrace Bay Pulp and the two associated sawmills. They've been shut down now for a number of months. The company keeps announcing that it intends to start up maybe a month or two months hence, but it never happens.

I think what the government is worried about is an announcement from this company that it's unable to reopen; that it's unable to work towards, look towards, a prospective reopening date because of the huge hydro bills that they're paying now, and the fact that those hydro bills are going to go even higher in the next 12 months. I think the government is again trying to smooth the waters and hoping that it will keep the waters smooth until after the next election.

Similarly, in Sault Ste. Marie, St. Marys Paper is essentially shut down. I think government members are worried that it might not reopen. If there are further increases in the hydro bills, the worry is that there will be an announcement that the shutdown will be permanent. I think this government again wants to smooth the waters and hopes there's no such announcement between now and the next election, basically no such announcement over the next 12 to 13 months. That's what I really think is going on here. This is about trying to smooth the waters before the next election.

Again, whether it smoothes the waters before the next election and keeps things off the public radar screen—I don't know if it will or it won't, but I can say definitively this is not going to do a thing in terms of the longer-term operations and sustainability of those mills, because we already know the industrial hydro bill is going to go up significantly over the next two or three years because of some of the policy changes this government has announced.

That takes me back to the energy credit. Once again, when they announced the energy credit, the government said that it was permanent. I have to ask, only a year before the next election campaign, why the government would do it and why they would say that it was permanent. I think the reason, once again, is about trying to smooth the waters with people before the next election and trying to make it seem as if it's something more than it is. I don't think it's going to work because, as I said already, when you take \$500 from people's right-hand pocket and then say, "Oh, maybe I'll give you \$150 back

in your left-hand pocket," most people can figure out that that's not a good deal. So I don't think it's going to work.

1650

Once again, I think that's what the government's really up to. This is not an energy efficiency strategy that would provide people with good, long-term savings, which is what Manitoba has. It's not a good long-term energy conservation strategy, which is what Manitoba has. This is, "Here, let us just give you a little bit of money before the election and hope that you feel good, but hope that you don't notice that we're taking \$500 at the same time out of your other pocket."

There's another part of this energy issue that is also going to be very hard on people from northern Ontario. The fact of the matter is the northern Ontario economy, in many cases, is based upon having to travel great distances. What it means is, whether you use diesel in your vehicle or whether you use gasoline in your vehicle, you use, just because of the distances, more of that form of energy.

Well, guess what? This government is going to apply the HST to that, too. So, if somebody is paying \$1 a litre for gasoline or \$1 a litre for diesel fuel now, according to this government's desire and its drive, come July 1, people will be paying \$1.08. That is going to take a substantial amount of money out of people's pockets in northern Ontario, and that is going to make it very, very difficult not only for individuals who have to go to work every day, it's going to make it very, very difficult for a number of industrial manufacturing concerns as well because, once again, it's really going to add to their bottom-line costs.

In fact, we asked an economist we know to look at the sale of diesel fuel and sale of gasoline fuel and look at costs. The estimate that the economist we contacted came up with is that the HST will take another \$835 million out of people's pockets at the gas pumps.

If I put this in context, the government's own figures show that the HST on the hydro bill will take \$425 million out of people's pockets, the HST on the heating bill will take another \$356 million, and the HST at the gas pumps will take another \$835 million. We're talking in the range of \$1.6 billion—\$1.6 billion that this government will take in just by applying the HST to people's energy usage. It's an astounding amount of money.

Once again, if you put this home energy tax credit, which would come out, max, at \$200 for a family with an income of \$45,000 a year or less or \$130 for an individual with an income of \$35,000 a year or less, I think people get the picture. Compared to how much more people are going to be paying, this credit is not going to do very much at all.

I spoke earlier about Manitoba. In fact, northern Ontario has a lot in common with Manitoba. Manitoba generates almost all of their electricity from falling water, hydro dams and hydro turbines, and that's one of the reasons why they have relatively low-cost electricity. The fact of the matter is that people in northern Ontario, where we have many fast-flowing rivers and many large

rivers, generate most of our electricity from falling water, hydro dams and hydro turbines. In fact, northern Ontario actually generates some of the cleanest, greenest and lowest-cost electricity on the planet. There are all kinds of hydro dams in my part of the province that generate electricity for one cent a kilowatt hour or less.

Actually, there's a surplus of electricity now. When Ontario Power Generation came before the legislative committee and we asked them to show their numbers, both in northwestern and northeastern Ontario. At various times during the year they actually open up the hydro dam and let the water run down the river because the dams generate electricity that can't be used. After this government's policy of driving industrial hydro rates through the roof has closed paper mill after paper mill, and then, following that, sawmill after sawmill, now there's not enough industrial manufacturing concerns to use the electricity. So we get to where we are today, and that is, they actually let electricity run down the river. The water that could be used to generate electricity actually runs down the river because there's no one to use the electricity.

What people across the north want to know is, "Gee, why can't that electricity, which is some of the lowest-cost on the planet to generate, the cleanest and greenest electricity, be made available at affordable rates so you can actually create jobs in northern Ontario—sustain some of the jobs that were there just a few years ago and have now been shut down?" Those are the real issues that people across the north would like to know. Those are the real questions that they would like to see answered.

One of the companies that has just announced that they're going to close is Xstrata in Timmins. It's really interesting to talk to Xstrata about their situation. If you go back over the last few years, Xstrata has actually come down to this Legislature, not once but about three times. They've come down three times to talk about how this explosion in the industrial hydro rate is costing them money. They point out that if you add up Timmins and Sudbury both, they've had over 3,000 employees. They will tell you that back in 2005, they were spending \$120 million purchasing electricity here in Ontario. That's how much electricity they were using. They were using two terawatt hours per year of electricity, so they were the largest industrial consumer of electricity. Well, they're now shutting down. They're going to move their whole metallurgical operation out of the province of Ontario and they're going to move to it Quebec. When you add it all up it's over 2,600 jobs, good jobs. Some of the best jobs will leave Timmins and move outside the province.

1700

They're very clear; they've been very clear since 2004. In 2004 they came, they made a presentation and they said—this is the presentation to the legislative committee on Bill 100—that this government's policy of driving industrial hydro rates through the province was causing them major headaches. They came down again and said it in 2005. They came down again in 2007. They came down again two years ago and said it very clearly.

Now, I think what people want to ask or ought to be asking is, will this government's announcement of a moderated industrial hydro rate for northern Ontario do anything about Xstrata? And the answer is no. Xstrata says it's too little; it's too late. So here's the picture. Here's what's going to happen. Xstrata is going to continue to mine that valuable ore in Ontario. They'll continue to mine that valuable ore in Ontario, but none of the processing, the refining, the smelting of that ore will happen in Ontario. That will all happen in Quebec. What it means is that some of the best jobs are leaving: the electrician jobs, the welders' jobs, the millwright jobs, the machinist jobs, the pipefitter jobs, the instrument mechanic jobs, the computer technician jobs. The best jobs will be leaving the province.

That's what's happened too with the paper and pulp mill side of things. If I start at the western edge of Ontario, in 2002 Kenora had three paper machines. The paper mill employed about 550 people in the mill and close to that number in the forestry and transportation operation: all together, 1,100 people. Gone. Dryden, the most modern efficient pulp and paper mill complex in all of Canada, had over \$5 billion of new investment in the last 15 years. In 2002, it had a sawmill, a softwood pulp mill and two paper machines. It employed over 1,100 people in the mill and probably close to that in the forestry and transportation side of things, likely over 2,000 jobs. What is there today? Sawmill: gone. Two paper machines: gone. The mill employs about 250 people in the pulp mill and maybe that many on the forest and transportation side.

Sioux Lookout: sawmill shut down. Ear Falls: sawmill shut down. Ignace: sawmill shut down. Atikokan: sawmill shut down. Thunder Bay had three paper machines at AbitibiBowater. It had one paper machine at Abitibi Mission, it had three paper machines at Cascades, it had a paper machine at the Smurfit-Stone containerboard plant, it had two paper machines at the Red Rock operation and it had four sawmills. What is there today? Three sawmills: gone. Only one is operating. The two paper machines in Red Rock: gone. The Smurfit-Stone paper machine: gone. The three Cascades paper machines: gone. The Abitibi Mission paper machine: gone. Two of the three paper machines at AbitibiBowater: gone, along with the hardwood kraft mill. And I could keep going: Marathon, Terrace Bay, Nakina, Longlac, Chapleau, Smooth Rock Falls. I could keep going.

But what's interesting, what's happening now is this: The pulp mills are running. The pulp mill in my hometown of Fort Frances is running full blast. While the paper machines and everything in Dryden are shut down, the pulp mill is running full blast. At AbitibiBowater paper in Thunder Bay the paper machines are limping along or shut down, but the softwood pulp mill is running full blast. Somebody might wonder, what are they doing? I'll tell you what they're doing. They can't operate the paper machines anymore. It costs too much money. The electricity costs too much money, and what the government has announced in the budget in terms of a special

industrial hydro rate for northern Ontario is not going to do anything to start up those paper machines. I've talked to every company; not one of them is going to restart a paper machine as a result of this. But what these companies are doing is, they're taking Ontario wood fibre—just like Xstrata's going to do in Timmins. Xstrata's going to take the valuable minerals out of the ground and ship them to Quebec to be processed, and 2,500 jobs will go in the process.

What the forest product companies are doing is, they take the wood fibre and they take it to the pulp mill in Fort Frances, the pulp mill in Dryden, the pulp mill in Thunder Bay; they do a quick and dirty semi-process to turn it into pulp, and the pulp gets shipped south to the United States. That's where the value-added paper is being made. I say to government members, if you want to check it out, Domtar—big company. Go to Domtar's website and they'll show you where they're getting the pulp and where they're making the paper.

The good jobs, the instrument mechanic jobs, the computer technology jobs, the machinist jobs, the electrician jobs, the pipefitter jobs, the welder, the millwright jobs—they're in the States now. All those value-added jobs are in the States.

Mr. David Orazietti: Just because of energy?

Mr. Howard Hampton: Yes, energy—

Mr. David Orazietti: The dollar has nothing to do with it?

Mr. Howard Hampton: The member from Sault Ste. Marie asks, "The dollar has nothing to do with it?" Companies have been dealing with a dollar that floats up and down for over 60 years. They're very experienced in using hedging and other devices to cover that, but what really hurts is an energy industrial hydro rate that keeps on going like this. What the McGuinty government announced in the budget in terms of a temporary three-year moderation of the industrial hydro rate for northern Ontario is not going to do a thing about that because it doesn't address the issue of the global adjustment formula, which is adding more and more.

But back to the point I was making. We see now Ontario's resources being harvested—the mineral resources, the forest resources—but as a result of this government's policy of driving the industrial hydro rate through the roof, less and less of those resources are being processed in Ontario. More and more, they're being shipped to Quebec, they're being shipped to the United States to be processed there, where all the value-added work is being done and where the good jobs are going. I think any reasonable person would look at this and say this is wrong. If you've got these valuable resources, especially in northern Ontario, where you can generate electricity at some of the lowest costs on the planet, why not come up with a plan where you allow companies to take advantage of the low-cost electricity that's generated and process those resources here so that good jobs are provided here? That would be a real plan.

I look at this—what has been introduced—and it's not going to do that. It won't restart the paper machines in

Thunder Bay. It won't restart the paper machines in Dryden. It's not going to reverse the decision made by Xstrata. At most, what it will do is it will quiet the waters for the 11 or 12 months in the run-up to the election campaign.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: That's what it's about.

Mr. Howard Hampton: And that's really what it's about. It's not going to improve the prospects for people in northern Ontario; it's going to simply smooth the waters for government members as they head into the next election.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Mr. David Orazietti: I'm pleased to comment on the member from Kenora—Rainy River's remarks. I'm always amazed to hear the perspective around energy and the forestry sector from the member. I know the member comes from northern Ontario, as do I, and has some understanding of the issues, but I can tell you, with respect to the paper mill that's in my community, the dollar has far more to do with the challenges and the costs at St. Marys Paper than energy and fibre do.

For example, when the dollar was at 65 cents moving to plus 90 cents, St. Marys Paper lost \$40 million. The energy costs, in comparison, were about \$7 million; fibre supply about \$8 million. In that light, we have brought in a pulp and paper energy transition program to offset some of those costs.

1710

I know the member spent most of his time talking about Bill 44, which is the northern Ontario energy credit. I want to encourage all members of the Legislature to vote in favour of the energy credit, because I think it's something that is very important, certainly to residents in my community, and I think it's important to residents in the member's riding as well.

The member is here railing against the government because we have not acted to do enough, quickly enough, and we have not raised the credits enough. I find it very odd that when the member was in government and had the opportunity as a cabinet minister of the government, the hydro rates went up 40% under their government. They voted against a project that would have helped to save and conserve 5,200 megawatts, and also built no new electricity supply in the entire five years they were in government. We are moving forward to build new capacity—3,200 megs online—as well as additional credits in the energy field, and I would ask all members to support those credits.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I look forward to entering the debate sometime later, I think probably about quarter to 6 or so. My speech would have a very similar tenor to that of the member from Kenora—Rainy River. Our parties are separated, of course, by philosophy—by a great distance—but our stances on this particular bill are remarkably similar.

The cost of electricity has skyrocketed and it's continuing to skyrocket under this government. This is going to become a huge issue. If this government had put the emphasis of this bill on the industrial rates to be used in the north, I would be far more willing to think that this bill was coming from the right part of your mandate, but that's not where you're placing the emphasis. You are placing the emphasis on the individual. You're trying to influence his vote. I can tell you that the people of northern Ontario are far too sophisticated to fall for that. They are going to understand that you have whacked them with hundreds of dollars of increased rates and you're giving them back 50 bucks. They are going to understand that clearly, and in fact they are going to be insulted by it. I think you're going to be very, very disappointed in this particular bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further comments and questions?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I want to thank the member for Kenora–Rainy River, because if there's one person in this House who understands the issue of energy, as far as electricity prices, it's Howard Hampton. He has spent most of his time dealing with this issue as the leader of our party and still is a strong advocate for an energy policy that would make some sense in this province. I just want to say to Howard that his comments are well made.

I think there are two parts to this. One is, what does it mean to the average citizen 18 years and older who rents or buys or owns an apartment or a house in northern Ontario? On the one hand, the government is going to give you a 25% decrease in electricity, but on the other hand, they're going to take it out of the other pocket by whacking you with the HST, by whacking you with the 10% increase and by whacking you with the global adjustment, so whatever you get as far as a savings of 25% on the one hand is going to be offset by the increases on the other hand. I think Mr. Hampton made that point quite clear.

On the industrial hydro rate, he's bang on. If this was such a good thing, my friend Mr. Oraziotti from Sault Ste. Marie would be standing in this Legislature saying how it turned the mind of Xstrata from shutting down the smelter refinery in Timmins to keeping those jobs here in Ontario. Not at all. We sat with the Premier. We were at the table with the Premier and Xstrata, and Xstrata said, "No, 25% doesn't cut it. Your electricity prices are driving us out of this province," including the 25%.

I say to the member from Sault Ste. Marie that he should pay a little bit more attention to what's going on in the economy of northern Ontario. He is railing against what was said by Mr. Hampton, but all I remember is that if we were lucky enough to have a government today that did the things that we did as a government in northern Ontario, we wouldn't have half the problems that we have now. This member should know that because of Algoma Steel and St. Mary's Paper and other things that were done in order to save Sault Ste. Marie and allow it to move forward from where it was then.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I appreciate just a moment or so to comment on the speech by the member from Kenora–Rainy River. He found, during his hour, a number of ways, a number of variations on a theme, to say that he doesn't like the legislation.

Let me say that part of our broad role is to look at where resources are needed in the province and to look at communities in the province which maybe, sometimes, need support differently than some other parts. That's the provision of this particular piece of legislation. It provides for some \$35 million for about half of northern Ontarians, with a grant of \$130 to \$200, singles or families, to help support them in their energy cost prices. That may not seem like a lot of money to some folks. On the industrial side of the picture, a three-year program of \$150 million annually—it's almost half a billion dollars over three years, half a billion dollars into the industrial sector—for the purposes of managing their electricity use with a decrease in electricity prices based on 2009 levels of almost 25%.

I don't see those as marginal amounts of money. I see it as important to individuals and families to help them manage their energy costs, particularly in areas where energy usage is higher for a variety of reasons, not the least of which would be climate, as well as access to things like natural gas. I'd say as well that supporting the industrial community to the tune of half a billion dollars over three years is substantive in trying to find mechanisms, among a large range of other things, to help support industry and make it viable for them to continue and/or expand operations.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Kenora–Rainy River has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Howard Hampton: I want to thank the members for their comments and, in my brief time to respond, just make this point. After we used the freedom-of-information process to finally get out of the government how much more the HST would add to people's hydro bills and their heating bills—and when you add the two together, it's \$425 million on the hydro bill and \$356 million on the heating bill—close to \$800 million is going to be taken out of people's pockets. What the government proposes in terms of this northern Ontario energy credit I think anyone would say is very modest in comparison. It really will be a situation where the McGuinty Liberals take \$500 million out of the right-hand pocket of low- and modest-income people in northern Ontario, maybe put \$150 million back in the left-hand pocket and then try to convince people that it's a good deal. It won't be a good deal.

People are hurting already. People are having a very difficult time paying their hydro bill, and I'm sad to say that this energy credit for northern Ontario residents is not going to fix the situation. It's not going to make it better. People will have an even harder time next year.

To the member from Sault Ste Marie: I've talked to just about every company that has shut down paper mills

across northern Ontario, and they're all very consistent. The issue which drives them and has driven them out of the province is the increasing cost of electricity in this province. So they choose to make their paper now in Quebec or Manitoba or the United States, and about the most they do now in Ontario is maybe saw some two-by-fours and make some pulp, because those things use less electricity in comparison to paper. They do the paper manufacturing in United States, and that is now a fact of—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. David Oraziatti: I'm pleased to join the debate today on Bill 44 in the context of initiatives that were put forward by our government in the 2010 budget.

You know, there's some great news for northerners and for our community in this budget with respect to energy initiatives as well as infrastructure initiatives. I want to take a few minutes and outline that, and I want to talk a little bit about, obviously, the specifics around the energy credit and how it will benefit individuals both in my riding and throughout northern Ontario.

First of all, the \$1.2-billion investment that will be going into northern Ontario that will support highways, hospitals, schools and a variety of other infrastructure projects is certainly very important. We've seen a huge improvement in those areas in our community over the last seven years.

1720

As you also know, we are putting in place a \$150-million northern industrial electricity rebate that will help industry. I know that our local paper mill saw some tremendous benefit from the northern pulp and paper energy transition program. This program, under the northern component of the budget, will offer large industry similar benefits. I've talked to those industries, certainly in our community. Essar Steel Algoma is very excited about this. It helps to further reduce their energy costs and helps to make them more competitive.

As you know, there is an energy credit for individuals. I think this is something that demonstrates that our government recognizes the increasing cost of energy in the province of Ontario, and also recognizes that in northern Ontario we certainly have challenges that are perhaps a little different than other parts of the province when it comes to those energy costs. That program is proposed at \$35 million, and I'm going to speak a little bit more specifically about that in a couple of minutes.

The northern Ontario heritage fund, I think, is a tremendous example of how we are also assisting northerners. When we came to government, the program was at \$60 million. It's a fund designed to support northerners, to support the economy in northern Ontario, to create new jobs and new opportunities for people in northern Ontario. At present, we've committed that the fund will be increased from \$60 million to \$100 million over the term of our government, and we've done that. Each year of this term, we have increased that fund by \$10 million. It presently stands at \$80 million. Following the passage

of the budget, if that's the will of the House, the program will be increased to \$90 million, and that's great news for our community. Hopefully next year, in the final year of this term, it will increase to \$100 million. There have been some exciting projects in Sault Ste. Marie that have come to life as a result of this program and this fund, and I know my northern colleagues are also reaping the benefits of a very, very important program. I know the member from Timmins—James Bay is here as well, and I'm sure the NOHFC program has made businesses, individuals and young entrepreneurs very happy in his riding as well.

There's another important initiative as part of the northern component: \$45 million over three years to support aboriginal peoples, so that they can play an even greater role in our economy, for skills training and for project development. I think it's really, really important that as the fastest-growing segment of the population in northern Ontario, our aboriginal population, the First Nations communities, are engaged in our economy and are engaged in the next generation of jobs in the north.

Another important initiative—and this is probably a bit more unique to my riding, and I know there are a few others that are affected by this. We have made a commitment of \$15 million for the Huron Central short-line rail infrastructure that will help support business and industry along the corridor between the Soo and Sudbury.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: Where are the feds?

Mr. David Oraziatti: I can hear my colleague from Algoma-Manitoulin, who is very excited about this. I think the largest section of the railway is probably in his riding, and he's probably got the most to be excited about. It's something that's very positive.

I know that the northern members of our government were very, very supportive of these components that make up the budget and certainly had conversations with the finance minister, Dwight Duncan. We tremendously appreciate the support from our colleagues in the House and from the finance minister, who recognized that these are some very serious issues and challenges. Of course, we have many challenges across the province in many sectors of the economy that we are working toward improving, but I'm really excited about this particular package of initiatives that is contained in the budget because it's going to make a difference in Sault Ste. Marie and in ridings right across northern Ontario.

With respect to energy, which is a topic of popular concern these days, between 2004 and 2010 we will have brought on more new electricity than any other jurisdiction in North America. I think that's something we should all be proud of in this House. It's something that Ontarians should be proud of. We are working to ensure a stable, reliable electricity grid in the province of Ontario. Since 2003, we've had 3,200 megawatts of new supply added. This represents about 9% in terms of province-wide capacity. To be frank, in contrast to what has been done in the past, there was limited, if any, capacity brought online, and that's a disadvantage because the reality was, by the same token, the supply

and the demand grew by about 8.5%. In fact, productivity of electricity went down and that's not something that makes Ontarians feel comfortable. It's not something that ensures the reliability and sustainability of our electricity grid, and that's something that we have worked very hard on this side of the House to change.

Now, with that, there are areas in which we can make these changes. We can build more coal-fired capacity in the province of Ontario, if that's what people are interested in, but I think we know that Ontarians want to see more renewable energy, more responsible decisions related to environment when it comes to the production and development of energy capacity.

I know that in my riding of Sault Ste. Marie we have seen tremendous benefits from the renewable energy strategies, from the standard offer program, which are bringing to life new projects and certainly creating new jobs. I have to say that the Brookfield energy project, the renewable energy wind farm that is in the Algoma-Manitoulin riding adjacent to the community of Sault Ste. Marie, has created enough wind energy to power 40,000 homes; a 189-megawatt project. It's the largest wind farm in the province and it's a tremendous benefit to our economy, the environment and the ongoing jobs that are generated from that.

But we know that we need to reach further and farther when it comes to energy capacity because we also want the jobs that come with manufacturing the components—the wind towers, the blades, the hubs and the motors—that go into the production of wind farms; similarly with solar production. We want the ability to manufacture right here in the province of Ontario all of the components that play a part or make up the renewable energy projects, and we're working hard to do that.

The \$135-million project at Essar Steel Algoma is a cogeneration project. This is a fabulous project. Essar uses about 140 megawatts of power. They produce waste energy or energy that is generated from the operations of making steel. In fact, the energy that is harnessed from the steel mill itself will, in fact, provide half of the power that Essar uses. So the \$135 million cogen project through the standard offer program brought to life a 70-megawatt project, which has helped substantially to reduce the energy costs at Essar Algoma and, in doing that, it has also helped to make Essar more competitive because, in effect, it lowers the price of the product that they need to sell on the market and recoup because they have greater efficiencies and it also, through the OPA contract, provides them with some cash flow because of the exchange of energy on the grid, which is great news.

The \$100-million Pod Solar Starwood Energy project that is now being built in Sault Ste. Marie—it's the first phase of 20 megawatts of a 60-megawatt project—is bringing to life a solar project in our community that I know the community is very excited about.

So between the cogeneration, the wind farm, the solar project and a number of other projects—there's the project at the city landfill, the methane collection project, that has been launched in partnership with the municipality; over \$7 million to green Sault Ste. Marie schools

and energy retrofits. If you think about things like even the gas tax funding, where over \$6 million has come to our community to purchase new buses, the latest buses that are on the market that run on 5% bio, it's a great news story because it's increasing ridership and it's also helping the environment.

So with respect to energy initiatives that have moved forward since 2003, I know our community has been excited about them. We have not seen those types of projects come to life in the past, and it's because we are a jurisdiction in this country that is really on the leading edge when it comes to the development of these projects. We know that there are many ridings across the province of Ontario that are seeing tremendous success with new green energy projects coming to life.

1730

With respect to the Ontario energy credit, I hope that all members of this Legislature are interested in supporting the Lowering Energy Costs for Northern Ontarians Act, 2010, which would amend the Taxation Act, 2007, and provide a northern Ontario energy credit for individuals. This is a permanent energy credit, and I think that's great news.

This is not a temporary, one-time measure. I heard the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke earlier saying, "Why are we talking about this? Why isn't this just in the budget? Why did you want to carve this out and talk about it as a separate piece of legislation?" He said that we were just paying politics with it because it's a good-news story and we want to talk about it. I heard the member from Kenora-Rainy River saying, "Why are we talking about this? This doesn't go far enough. This is not a good bill. We shouldn't be talking about it." I can't quite figure out where the opposition is coming from on this issue. I understand it's their job to be critical and, hopefully, provide constructive criticism on initiatives that we are bringing forward, but I'm excited about this because it will make a difference in the lives of many people in northern Ontario who have high energy costs or energy costs that they're challenged with. It is means-tested, so it will be a credit that is going to those who most need the support.

To be eligible for the credit, you simply have to file your tax return, pay rent or property tax that qualifies as occupancy cost for the Ontario property credit or pay an energy bill if the principal resides in a residence or on a First Nations reserve. So you need to live in one of the areas or jurisdictions. I think this has been discussed; some members had raised this earlier. The districts are: Parry Sound; Nipissing; Manitoulin; Sudbury; Timiskaming; Algoma; Cochrane; Thunder Bay; Rainy River; and Kenora. Anybody living in those districts will be eligible for what will hopefully be a permanent credit that all members in the House will support.

The maximum that can be paid out is \$130 for individuals and \$200 for families, and that obviously includes single parents to help offset their costs. The maximum payment would be reduced by 1% of adjusted family net income over \$35,000 for single individuals

and \$45,000 for families. The benefit would be eliminated when the income reaches \$48,000 for individuals and \$65,000 for families. It's easily fair to say that there will be more than several hundred thousand individuals in northern Ontario receiving this credit. This is an important credit.

The application—we should probably be clear on how people will receive this credit. For this year, individuals will have to apply to the Ontario Ministry of Revenue. The Ministry of Revenue will be sending out applications to those people, based on their income from 2008-09. They will be sending out applications directly to those individuals so we have an idea in Ontario of who is eligible for this already. Other individuals, perhaps if they've moved to northern Ontario more recently, can pick those up at local ServiceOntario offices in northern Ontario or they can go online and simply print the application. They can file that application to receive the funding.

The first instalment after the determination date will take place on November 15, 2010, and the second instalment will be after the determination date of February 15, 2011. The deadline to apply will be June 30, 2011.

That's for this year. For subsequent years, the credit would be paid on a quarterly basis by Revenue Canada. To be entitled to it, the individual would simply need to fill out the credit on their income tax form and submit that, and if they qualify, they will receive it. The deadline to apply will be three years after the tax filing date, so there is a window for those who perhaps have missed it and have not filled that out or weren't informed about it. They've got an opportunity to do that because we want to make sure that individuals who truly need the energy credit and can benefit from the energy credit will, in fact, receive it.

There are a number of other initiatives that relate to this, and I think they're important as well. They build on some of the progress that, under our government, we have initiated for northerners. Some of the topics have been raised over the last several hours of debate on the bill, but I think it's worth mentioning that in 2007-08, \$82 million for northern regional and municipal infrastructure flowed to municipalities, \$39 million through the rural infrastructure investment initiative and an additional \$36 million through the municipal roads and bridges program.

We've talked a little bit about the benefits to the NOHFC and the northern Ontario heritage program and how that's being expanded.

We're also, for northern Ontario, relieving the business education tax. Cumulatively for the region, it equates to about \$70 million over three years, which is a substantial cost to businesses in the north, and will obviously help to support them.

Forty million dollars over three years is being dedicated for initiatives to support the Mining Act modernization.

More than \$30 million will go toward the building of broadband in rural and northern areas. That will be in

partnership with the federal government's connecting rural Canadians program.

There are a couple of other initiatives that I think are important. The bioeconomy, which is very attractive to the northern Ontario economy. In Sault Ste. Marie, the invasive species initiative that we put \$15 million into, and the project in Thunder Bay for the Centre for Research and Innovation in the Bioeconomy, which was a \$25-million investment, demonstrate our commitment to support northerners beyond simply the energy credit. It's a way to support northerners when it comes to important initiatives around economic development, allowing our young people to have the opportunity to remain in northern Ontario, and finding very real ways to tap into the economic opportunities that exist in northern Ontario.

This is in addition to the investments that we're making in education and health care. We've made some important education investments in northern Ontario: over \$300 million in new funding. That's a 54% increase on a per pupil basis in seven years. It has meant more teachers, more resource staff, new schools and great news for students across the province.

In addition, in the budget, \$2.6 billion will be going into health care to help further increase our supports for health care. Over the term of our government, it has meant a 57% increase when it comes to investments in that particular sector.

There is much in this budget for all Ontarians, and there is much in the budget that demonstrates, I think, a very real commitment to northerners, especially when you cumulatively take the credits that are being put in place.

The other thing that we should remember is that for every \$100 in credit that is put in place, the individual needs to spend \$1,250 on non-previously-HST-taxed items before they're at a loss. I think that's really important.

I will have an opportunity to talk a little bit about those credits: the property grant that has been doubled to \$500; the \$260 HST credit; the \$92 child credit; the energy credit on top of the existing energy credit that is being put in place—it's \$1,025; as well as the income tax reduction that took place—great news for people in the province of Ontario.

Again, there is great news for northerners in this budget. I want to thank the finance minister for delivering a budget that respects and supports those initiatives, and also thank my colleagues for being supportive of this.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: The member talks about the effect that this bill might have on the people of the north, and you can't disagree that it will have an effect, minor as that might be.

Had this program been focused on industry—most of the power-generating plants in the north were built to support the pulp and paper industry in the north. The cost of generating power out of those plants—those plants,

interestingly enough, are not connected to the general Ontario grid—means that to have one price of electricity across the province really doesn't make that much sense, particularly when the north is so dependent on those pulp mills for employment. If this bill had been aimed at reducing those electricity costs to a point where those mills could begin to operate again and be competitive with other jurisdictions that have much cheaper electricity rates—in Quebec and Manitoba, for instance—this bill would have had a much greater effect on the economy in Ontario and on the lifestyles of the people in the north.

1740

In the north, the two things that drive the economy up there are mining and forestry products: pulp, paper and lumber. When those two industries suffer, so suffers the north. It's too bad that the government doesn't recognize the fact that an industrial rate for electricity in the north is something that is needed in order for that part of Ontario to take its rightful place as a leader in those basic industries. I'm sorry that the government has missed the boat on that opportunity in this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I just say to my friend from Sault Ste. Marie that the bottom line here is that you ask yourself, as a company that's operating in northern Ontario, be it in mining or forestry, "Am I any better off now? Or would I be better off in Quebec or Manitoba?" The answer is that they're better off in Quebec and Manitoba, and unfortunately that's the case.

It used to be that Ontario was a leader when it came to making sure that we were competitive as far as electricity prices in this province, not just for individuals but for the industrial hydro rate that we offered. We had a crown corporation called Ontario Hydro whose mission it was to provide electricity at cost to those industrial users so that they could invest in Ontario, operate their mills and plants here in the province and compete against other jurisdictions like Quebec and Manitoba. What we have now is this hybrid, partly privatized, partly deregulated system that the Tories put in place and the Liberals have accelerated into being, which basically falls between both and doesn't serve either well. What you now have is, if you're the Xstratas or the Tembecs of this world, if you're operating in Quebec or Manitoba you can operate for cheaper because of electricity prices. That's the bottom line.

The member says, "Well, you know, we've put \$150 million into this initiative," and I'm not going to say the 25% rebate is a bad thing. What I'm going to say is, don't make it out to be what it's not, because there was already an 18% rebate in place. It was called the pulp and paper energy rebate program that offered the pulp and paper industry an 18% rebate on electricity prices up until the end of this year. I think it was going to end in the fall of 2010. All this government has done is moved it from 18% to 25% for those who are using it now and made it available to other industrial users under certain criteria. But the bottom line is that electricity prices for

the industrial user are still higher in this province compared to elsewhere.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from Brant.

Mr. Dave Levac: I appreciate the opportunity to engage in the discussion about Bill 44 so that, if anyone was listening, I can make it clear that the comments that we're hearing are not talking about the bill, as the member has been doing.

The member from Sault Ste. Marie has been talking about the permanent northern Ontario energy credit for individuals who live in the north. That's what he was talking about. He spent his entire time describing the program to ensure that everyone understands his advocacy, which is an extremely strong advocacy for his riding and for the people in the north, because he's tenacious in caucus when it comes to talking about issues for the north and how we can help the people who live in the north, and he continues to do so. In his speech today, he talked specifically about Bill 44, which is to do just that: speaking on behalf of the citizens that he represents in terms of bringing their energy costs down.

If we pay attention to what the bill says, it also includes something I think deserves repeating, and that is that First Nations people living in the northern territories will incur residential energy costs but will also be eligible for the credit if they apply properly for it.

I'm looking at what this bill is doing. I'm looking at what this bill says, and, quite frankly, the member from Sault Ste. Marie is absolutely correct in staying focused on what this particular bill is doing. I know that he knows that he can make some comments about some of the exaggerated concerns that are being expressed for the citizens who are talking about their energy costs. If we could have them talk about that part, we did hear both of them saying, "Yeah, okay, it's an okay thing. Now let us talk about these other things." They're trying to say the opposite. They're trying to make sure that people are not listening to what the member has been talking about, which is making sure that the credit is given to this member's work for the citizens of—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further comments and questions?

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I just want to compliment my friend from Sault Ste. Marie on an excellent presentation talking about the energy rebate system that will be put in place for people in the northern districts. It is very important to the people that I serve to know that the northern members of the government caucus have stood up for them, have gone to the meeting with Mr. Duncan, have talked to him and have received a favourable response. We believe that that is something we would have expected from Mr. Duncan because he's always been sensitive to the views of northern caucus and the northern people.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Supportive of the north.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: He's always been supportive, as you say, Mr. Whip, of the issues that resonate across northern Ontario.

It is true that this does not fix every energy problem that ever was. It is true that the northern economy has and has had some great difficulty since the collapse of the housing market in the US and the collapse of markets, generally, in the US. We do know that, and we are moving forward on that. But we do know, and my constituents know, that when they count on people to do things for them, people like the member from Sault Ste. Marie, the member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan, the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane and the member from North Bay, who have stood up for them time after time and not just made a lot of noise, they've actually delivered results to people of northern Ontario.

I am particularly pleased, and the member mentioned this, that the Huron Central railroad is moving forward with the assistance of the government of Ontario for \$15 million to keep that vital freight line in order so that we can move the pulp and paper from Espanola, and we can move the steel from Essar Steel.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Sault Ste. Marie has two minutes in which to respond.

Mr. David Oraziatti: I appreciate the members from Halton, Timmins–James Bay, Brant and Algoma–Manitoulin commenting on this.

We can have a debate about the energy records of each government. I have no problem having that discussion. The reality is that energy rates went up 40% under the NDP government. They built no new capacity and paid \$150 million to cancel a project from Manitoba. The member talks about energy in Manitoba; they paid \$150 million to cancel a project from there. The Conservative government built no new energy capacity. Demand went up by 8.5%, and generation fell by 6%. So I have no problem having the discussion around energy as a whole and energy policy because I'm pleased to put our record around energy production development up against any of the other parties that are here.

But today we're talking about a northern Ontario energy credit for people, for individuals, that my colleagues are supportive of, that the northern caucus supported, that the finance minister brought in in the budget. We are very appreciative of that, and I hope that all members of this House, regardless of their party stripe, will say that this is a good initiative, that this is something that can be supported.

I think the member from Algoma–Manitoulin is correct. Does it address every energy issue or challenge that we have in the province? Of course not, but this is a great step forward. This is important for people in northern Ontario.

I want to know if the NDP is going to support the northern Ontario energy credit. I want to know if the Conservative caucus is going to support the northern Ontario energy credit because I know that people in my community are counting on the northern Ontario energy credit to make a difference in their life. This is \$200 for families; it's \$130 for individuals. It's in addition to

countless other positive initiatives in the budget, and I want to encourage all members to support this.

1750

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It is my great pleasure to participate in this debate and to talk a little bit about what this is and is not for the people of northern Ontario, and I want to thank my friend from the Conservative caucus for giving me an opportunity to do so.

This bill does two things. It provides a 25% rebate for industrial users in northern Ontario and also for individual consumers.

I want to start with industrial users. The government is making this up: "Hallelujah, praise the Lord. It's going to fix every problem we have with energy in the province of Ontario." But finally, I heard at the end of this debate from two northern members, saying, "Oh my God, this doesn't fix the entire problem." So I want to say to the Liberal caucus: Finally, you understand that we have a problem in northern Ontario. As they say, once you admit that you have a problem, then you're close to at least trying to figure out a solution to the problems we have in northern Ontario.

Let's be clear about what's going on. There is a huge problem in the north when it comes to electricity prices, and that's why our industrial users are amongst the highest-paying electrical customers in the province. It takes an extreme amount of power to run a pulp and paper mill. It takes even more power to run a refinery or smelter. It happens to be that the industries that we're involved with in northern Ontario, which are the transformation of natural resources from the mineral state or the forestry sector, are huge customers of Ontario Hydro. For them, when the price of electricity goes up by 5% or 10% or whatever it might be in a period of time, it's a huge bill.

I'll give you an example. As my good friend Mr. Chudleigh would know, if you run a paper mill in Ontario, about 25% to 30% of your cost is what? Electricity. So if you get a 10% increase all of a sudden, as we're about to get—there's going to be a 10% increase, as voted on by the electrical power authority, plus there's going to be the HST. They're going to get an 18% increase on their electricity bills come July 1. So if you're Tembec in Kapuskasing, if you're in Thunder Bay, if you're in Espanola running a pulp and paper mill, you're going to get an 18% increase on your hydro bill come this July 1. Well, happy Canada Day to all of us, because for them it means a huge increase. If, let's say, 25% of your operating cost is electricity and you're going to get an 18% increase on your electricity rate this July 1, it is a big deal when it comes to the bottom line.

The government finally agrees that there's a problem. They're coming forward with this particular initiative of a 25% rebate on industrial rates for about half of the general population of northern Ontario. Is that a bad thing? Hear it from me, as a New Democrat: absolutely not. I think it's a step in the right direction. But does it resolve the problem that we're going to have and will

continue to have in northern Ontario? Absolutely not, because what you're going to end up with come July 1 is—let's back up.

Before I even go there, prior to this 25% announcement that was given in the budget, for those electricity users who were in the pulp and paper industry, they already had an 18% rebate. It was called the pulp and paper energy rebate program. They already had an 18% rebate that had been put in place by who? Give credit. It was put in place by the Liberal government about three years ago, because they recognized that the electricity rate for pulp and paper users was really difficult and they had to do something. So they put in place an 18% rebate about three years ago.

This particular rebate was coming to an end this fall. Emco and others who are involved in the electricity battles with the provincial government, said, "Listen, we need to have at least the 18%. If we don't have the 18%, it means we're going to shut down our mills." So the government said, "Okay, what can we do?" So they came forward in the budget with this 25% rebate. I'm not saying it's a bad thing—but let's not make it out for what it is. We moved from an 18% rebate, if you're in pulp and paper, to 25%. So, yes, it's a savings for the pulp and paper industry of at least 7% more than they would have had under the old program. For certain users who are in certain criteria, they will get the full 25%. But my point is this: You're going to lose 18% come July 1 because of what's happening on the HST and what's happening with the electricity prices that are going to go up in this province—or actually, they're being applied to go up by another 10%. So we're going to get an 18% increase come July 1—that's only on the one hand. Plus, how much are you going to lose on the global adjustment? The global adjustment rate that's on everybody's bill in the province of Ontario, but is really problematic for the large industrial electricity users, is way over 18%, so we've got a huge problem.

I look at Tembec in Kapuskasing. When you looked at their hydro bill about a year ago, the global adjustment meant basically revenue-neutral. The global adjustment didn't add a heck of a lot of cost to the hydro bill for Tembec in Kapuskasing and any other pulp and paper mill in northern or southern Ontario.

But this global adjustment has pushed, as of February of this year, a \$1.8-million per month additional hydro rate that you didn't have to pay last year. And you know what? It's not going to get better. It's going to get worse, because the government has decided, rather than to socialize the costs of green energy, which I think is a good thing—I think green energy is a great idea. They put the entire green energy and all other investments for nuclear, all investments for Niagara and others, on to the rate of hydro, and as a result of that, we're going to be raising the price of electricity on the global adjustment.

You're going to save, yes, with a 25% decrease, supposedly, if you're one of the new players who can apply for this program, but you're going to pay way more than 25%, I would argue, by December 2011. You know you're

going to be paying 18% more come July, and you're going to be paying far more than that come December.

So what has the government done? It's a little bit like the little Dutch boy who stood at the bottom of the dam and said, "Oh, my God, the dam is leaking," and stuck his finger in the dam. Meanwhile, the water is running out somewhere else. You may be able to slow it down for a bit, but eventually it's going to catch up with you and you're going to get drowned in the price of electricity, as in the story of the little Dutch boy with the dam.

I just say to the government across the way: Don't make this out to be the saviour of the industrial infrastructure in northern Ontario, because it is not. The proof is in the pudding. If Xstrata was so enamoured with your 25% decrease in electricity—and I'll admit it here: For Xstrata, it was a real 25% as of the implementation of this particular bill. They would lose 18% come July 1, and they would have a 7% saving overall by July 1. It wasn't enough to stop them from making their decision to shut down the copper-zinc refinery and smelter in the city of Timmins and move it off to Quebec. Obviously, it didn't respond to the problem.

I say to the government, in all honesty, it's a step in the right direction; I'm not going to say it's not. At least you're trying to move forward. But it's a real small step in solving the problem of the industrial users in northern Ontario.

For the average citizen of the north who is going to get a benefit from this 25% reduction, two things: One, yes, you're going to get a 25% rebate if you apply for it, but you're going to get an 18% increase come July 1. So you're up 7%, but it is only for certain individuals who are under a certain income level in northern Ontario. For most families in the north, it's going to be an issue where they're not going to get any rebate. The government will argue, "Well, we have to income-test this to some degree." I would argue that your income testing may not be adequate when it comes to the realities of what people have to face.

In the few seconds I've got left, I just want to say this: For First Nations, it's a disaster. Howard Hampton, the member for Kenora-Rainy River, made the point, I thought, extremely well, and people should be attuned to this. The majority of the housing on a reserve is electrically heated. It's not like that because they decided they'd like to have electricity as a heating system. It's because there are no natural gas lines that go to reserves. There's no such thing as natural gas up there, and when it comes to putting oil in the furnace, it's a very expensive option because often you have to fly the fuel in by cargo plane, so that throws the price of oil up.

The government decided years ago, when they built these houses, and even today as we build new houses, that they be electrically heated. As a result, the average hydro bill on-reserve in the winter is about \$1,000 a month. If you give me an 18% increase, that's almost \$200 more a month that I'm going to have to pay in electricity rates. Yes, I can get the rebate should I apply for it, but I would venture to guess that there's a whole bunch of people who will not apply because they will not be conscious of the program in the first place.

I see that we're almost at 6 of the clock, and I look forward to continuing this debate at a future time.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. I would like to call members' attention to a guest we have today in the members' area. Jonathan Allan, a

recent graduate of the international studies program at Glendon College of York University, has been here to witness this afternoon's debate.

It is now 6 of the clock, and this House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1800.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Aggelonitis, Hon. / L'hon. Sophia (LIB)	Hamilton Mountain	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Arthurs, Wayne (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	Attorney General / Procureur général Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Broten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Caplan, David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Carroll, M. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism and Culture / Ministre du Tourisme et de la Culture
Chiarelli, Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Crozier, Bruce (LIB)	Essex	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (LIB)	Prince Edward–Hastings	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Energy and Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Énergie et de l'Infrastructure
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby-Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB)	Mississauga East-Cooksville / Mississauga-Est-Cooksville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay-Superior North / Thunder Bay-Supérieur-Nord	Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry / Ministre du Développement du Nord, des Mines et des Forêts
Hampton, Howard (NDP)	Kenora-Rainy River	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Hoy, Pat (LIB)	Chatham-Kent-Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West-Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest-Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges-Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton-Springdale	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Johnson, Rick (LIB)	Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin-Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket-Aurora	
Kormos, Peter (NDP)	Welland	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Kular, Kuldip (LIB)	Bramalea-Gore-Malton	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB)	Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Levac, Dave (LIB)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean-Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga-Brampton South / Mississauga-Brampton-Sud	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity-Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay-Atikokan	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McMeekin, Ted (LIB)	Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough- Westdale	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa-Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa-Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound-Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East-Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est-Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Hon. / L'hon. Carol (LIB)	Huron-Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Munro, Julia (PC)	York-Simcoe	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	
Murray, Glen R (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Oraziotti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB)	Kitchener-Conestoga	
Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (LIB)	Elgin-Middlesex-London	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (LIB)	Scarborough-Agincourt	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres
		Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées
		Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
		Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches-East York	
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Economic Development and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London-Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland-Quinte West	
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Nipissing	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales
		Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton-Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto-Danforth	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga-Erindale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	
Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Perth-Wellington	Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener-Waterloo	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Yakubski, John (PC)	Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Garfield Dunlop
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Robert Bailey
Robert Bailey, Gilles Bisson
Jim Brownell, Kim Craitor
Bob Delaney, Garfield Dunlop
Amrit Mangat, Phil McNeely
John O'Toole
Clerks / Greffiers: William Short (pro tem.), Sylwia Przedziecki

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Pat Hoy
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laura Albanese
Laura Albanese, Wayne Arthurs
Toby Barrett, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Pat Hoy, Norm Miller
Glen R Murray, Charles Sousa
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: David Oraziotti
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Helena Jaczek
Bob Chiarelli, Steve Clark
Helena Jaczek, Kuldeep Kular
Dave Levac, Rosario Marchese
Bill Mauro, David Oraziotti
Joyce Savoline
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Laura Albanese, Michael A. Brown
Donna H. Cansfield, M. Aileen Carroll
Howard Hampton, Ernie Hardeman
Lisa MacLeod, Leeanna Pendergast
Jim Wilson
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Leeanna Pendergast
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Ted Chudleigh
Mike Colle, Christine Elliott
Peter Kormos, Reza Moridi
Leeanna Pendergast, Lou Rinaldi
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Bas Balkissoon
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Yasir Naqvi
Bas Balkissoon, Bob Delaney
Joe Dickson, Sylvia Jones
Amrit Mangat, Norm Miller
Yasir Naqvi, Michael Prue
Mario Sergio
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Norman W. Sterling
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Peter Shurman
M. Aileen Carroll, France Gélinas
Jerry J. Ouellette, David Ramsay
Liz Sandals, Peter Shurman
Norman W. Sterling, Maria Van Bommel
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Paul Miller
David Caplan, Kim Craitor
Jeff Leal, Gerry Martiniuk
Paul Miller, Bill Murdoch
Michael Prue, Lou Rinaldi
Tony Ruprecht
Clerks / Greffiers: Trevor Day (pro tem.), Sylwia Przedziecki

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vic Dhillon
Vic Dhillon, Cheri DiNovo
Rick Johnson, Sylvia Jones
Jean-Marc Lalonde, Ted McMeekin
Shafiq Qaadri, Khalil Ramal
Elizabeth Witmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions / Comité
spécial de la santé mentale et des dépendances**

Chair / Président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott
Bas Balkissoon, Christine Elliott
Kevin Daniel Flynn, France Gélinas
Helena Jaczek, Sylvia Jones
Jeff Leal, Liz Sandals
Maria Van Bommel
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

Continued from back cover

Victims of crime	
Mr. Norm Miller	1141
Comedy festival	
Mr. Gilles Bisson	1142
Prescription drugs	
Mr. Wayne Arthurs	1142
Sports awards	
Mrs. Christine Elliott.....	1142
Disaster relief	
Mr. Jim Brownell	1143
Royal Canadian Navy	
Mr. Jeff Leal.....	1143
Education Week	
Mr. Rick Johnson	1143
Report, Environmental Commissioner of Ontario	
The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters).....	1143

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES / RAPPORTS DES COMITÉS

Standing Committee on Justice Policy	
Mr. David Zimmer	1144
Report adopted	1144

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS / DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI

Excellent Care for All Act, 2010, Bill 46,	
Ms. Matthews / Loi de 2010 sur l'excellence des	
soins pour tous, projet de loi 46, Mme Matthews	
First reading agreed to.....	1144
Victims of Crime Awareness Week Act, 2010, Bill	
47, Mr. Chudleigh / Loi de 2010 sur la Semaine de	
sensibilisation aux victimes d'actes criminels,	
projet de loi 47, M. Chudleigh	
First reading agreed to.....	1144
Mr. Ted Chudleigh.....	1144
Child and Youth Mental Health Awareness Act,	
2010, Bill 48, Ms. Horwath / Loi de 2010 sur la	
sensibilisation à la santé mentale des enfants et des	
jeunes, projet de loi 48, Mme Horwath	
First reading agreed to.....	1144
Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	1144

MOTIONS

Sign-language interpretation	
Hon. Monique M. Smith	1144
Motion agreed to	1144

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES / DÉCLARATIONS MINISTÉRIELLES ET RÉPONSES

Health care	
Hon. Deborah Matthews	1144
Children's Mental Health Week / Semaine de la	
santé mentale des enfants	
Hon. Laurel C. Broten.....	1146
Health care	
Mrs. Christine Elliott.....	1146
Children's Mental Health Week	
Ms. Sylvia Jones.....	1147
Children's Mental Health Week	
Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	1147
Health care	
Mme France Gélinas	1148

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Ontario pharmacists	
Mrs. Julia Munro	1148
Ontario drug benefit program	
Mr. Paul Miller.....	1148
Ontario pharmacists	
Mr. Rick Johnson	1148
Sale of domestic wines and beers	
Mr. Robert Bailey.....	1149
Replacement workers	
Mme France Gélinas	1149
Public transit	
Mr. Mike Colle.....	1149
Service centres	
Mr. Steve Clark	1149
School closures	
Mr. Peter Kormos.....	1149
Climate change	
Mr. Phil McNeely.....	1150
Wind turbines	
Mr. Ted Arnott	1150
Diagnostic services	
Mme France Gélinas	1150
Ontario pharmacists	
Mr. Jeff Leal.....	1150
Taxation	
Ms. Sylvia Jones.....	1150
Changement de climat	
M. Phil McNeely	1151
Taxation	
Mr. Robert Bailey.....	1151

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Lowering Energy Costs for Northern Ontarians Act, 2010, Bill 44, Mr. Duncan / Loi de 2010 sur la réduction des coûts d'énergie pour les Ontariens du Nord, projet de loi 44, M. Duncan

Hon. Gerry Phillips.....	1151
Mr. Wayne Arthurs.....	1151
Mr. David Ramsay.....	1156
Mr. Norman W. Sterling.....	1158
Mr. Gilles Bisson.....	1158
Mr. Bruce Crozier.....	1158
Mr. Ted Chudleigh	1159
Mr. Wayne Arthurs.....	1159
Mr. Norm Miller.....	1159
Mr. John Yakabuski.....	1163
Mr. Gilles Bisson.....	1168
Mr. Michael A. Brown.....	1168
Mr. Steve Clark.....	1168
Mr. Howard Hampton.....	1169
Mr. Norm Miller.....	1169
Mr. Howard Hampton.....	1169
Mr. David Oraziatti.....	1176
Mr. Ted Chudleigh	1176
Mr. Gilles Bisson.....	1177
Mr. Wayne Arthurs.....	1177
Mr. Howard Hampton.....	1177
Mr. David Oraziatti.....	1178
Mr. Ted Chudleigh	1180
Mr. Gilles Bisson.....	1181
Mr. Dave Levac	1181
Mr. Michael A. Brown.....	1181
Mr. David Oraziatti.....	1182
Mr. Gilles Bisson.....	1182
Second reading debate deemed adjourned.....	1184

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Monday 3 May 2010 / Lundi 3 mai 2010

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Hon. Michael Chan	1129
Wearing of ribbons	
Hon. Laurel C. Broten.....	1129
Members' anniversaries	
The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters).....	1129
Visitors	
The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters).....	1129

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Government's record	
Mr. Tim Hudak	1129
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	1130
Taxation	
Mr. Tim Hudak	1130
Hon. John Wilkinson.....	1130
Health care	
Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	1131
Hon. Deborah Matthews	1131
Nurse practitioners	
Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	1132
Hon. Deborah Matthews	1132
Hydro rates	
Mr. John Yakabuski	1133
Hon. Brad Duguid	1133
Environmental protection	
Mr. Peter Tabuns.....	1133
Hon. John Gerretsen.....	1133
Children's mental health services	
Mrs. Liz Sandals	1134
Hon. Laurel C. Broten.....	1134
Taxation	
Mr. Norm Miller	1134
Hon. John Wilkinson.....	1134
Police	
Mr. Peter Kormos.....	1135
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	1135
Taxation	
Mr. David Zimmer	1136
Hon. John Wilkinson.....	1136
Pediatric forensic pathology inquiry	
Mr. Ted Chudleigh.....	1136
Hon. Christopher Bentley.....	1136

Taxation

Ms. Andrea Horwath	1137
Hon. John Wilkinson.....	1137

Tourism

Mr. Bruce Crozier	1137
Hon. Michael Chan	1137

Renewable energy

Ms. Sylvia Jones.....	1138
Hon. Brad Duguid	1138

Manufacturing jobs

Mr. Paul Miller.....	1138
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	1138

Building code

Mr. Phil McNeely.....	1139
Hon. James J. Bradley	1139

Use of electronic devices in House

Mr. Peter Kormos.....	1139
The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters).....	1140

Visitors

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters).....	1140
--------------------------------------	------

DEFERRED VOTES / VOTES DIFFÉRÉS

Election Statute Law Amendment Act, 2010, Bill 231, Mr. Bentley / Loi de 2010 modifiant des lois en ce qui concerne les élections, projet de loi 231, M. Bentley	
Third reading agreed to	1141

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mrs. Liz Sandals.....	1141
Hon. Deborah Matthews	1141
Mr. Norm Miller.....	1141
Hon. Laurel C. Broten.....	1141
The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters).....	1141

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

Polish community	
Mr. John Yakabuski	1141
Huntington's disease	
Mrs. Liz Sandals.....	1141

Continued on inside back cover



No. 26

N° 26

ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Second Session, 39th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 39^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 4 May 2010

Mardi 4 mai 2010

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

<http://www.ontla.on.ca/>

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7410 or 325-3708.

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7410 ou le 325-3708.

Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services
Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



Service du Journal des débats et d'interprétation
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400; télécopieur, 416-325-7430
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 4 May 2010

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 4 mai 2010

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the Hindu prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

EXCELLENT CARE FOR ALL ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR L'EXCELLENCE DES SOINS POUR TOUS

Ms. Smith, on behalf of Ms. Matthews, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 46, An Act respecting the care provided by health care organizations / Projet de loi 46, Loi relative aux soins fournis par les organismes de soins de santé.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Debate?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I'll be sharing my time this morning with the member from Scarborough—Rouge River.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: It is with great pride that I rise on behalf of the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to speak to the second reading of our government's proposed Excellent Care for All legislation. I do so in the hope that all members of this House will agree with me when I say that this is the right piece of legislation at the right time for health care in Ontario. It is a piece of legislation that will, if passed, improve the quality and the value of the health care that Ontarians receive. Quality and value: two characteristics that no health care system should be without. If you're not getting both, you're not getting either.

This bill, if passed, would lay the groundwork for a fundamental culture shift that we want to see take place in health care in Ontario, a fundamental culture shift that we believe must take place. We believe that Ontario health care providers and executives should be accountable for improving patient care. We believe that money should follow the patient, meaning that funding should be clearly linked to the services that are provided in our system. We believe that there should be an independent expert advisory body to provide recommendations on clinical practices guidelines. Basically, we believe that future investments in health care should get results and improve patient health, period. And we believe that the Excellent Care for All bill is an absolutely necessary first step to achieving all of these things.

We are at a very important juncture in the development of the Ontario health care system. The last six years have seen tremendous developments, from the establishment of LHINs to the creation of family health teams to the launch of wait time systems. We have, in the process, here and there begun to look at tying increases in spending to improvements in quality, but it's time to stop looking and time to start doing, because we are running out of time. The demands being placed on our health care system are virtually infinite; government resources are not. Twenty years ago, 32 cents of every dollar spent on government programs were spent on health care; today, we're spending 46 cents of every dollar; 50 cents, half of our budget, is right around the corner. If we continue the way we're going, it will be 70 cents. We can't continue the way we're going. Ontario health expenditures this year are projected to be \$43.5 billion, and they're expected to grow by 4.4% and 4.9% over the next two years. If we continue the way we're going, by 2020, which is not that far off, the gap between the demand for health care services and what we would need to spend would be roughly \$26 billion. We can't continue the way we're going.

Thus, the government has introduced this bill because we looked at the health care system, of which we're all very proud, of which we know Ontarians are very proud, but it is a system that is threatening to become so expensive that it will crowd out all the other priorities, the other public services which we and Ontarians are so proud of: investing in our schools, helping our vulnerable, protecting the environment and building our infrastructure. How do we continue to fund health care without allowing this to happen? The answer, which is why we introduced the bill we're discussing today, is that we need to do a better job of getting value for money in our health care system. Quality and value: If you're not getting both, you're not getting either. That's what I'm referring to when I said we must tie the increases in spending to improvements in quality. Right now, we know that's not happening, and there is ample evidence that improvements are there to be found—ample evidence.

Some 40,000 patients were admitted to the hospital last year with conditions that could have been better managed in the community at a lower cost; 140,000 patients last year had unplanned readmissions to hospital within 30 days of their original discharge—140,000 unplanned readmissions. This is very costly and inefficient.

Another example: the use of typical unnecessary pre-operative tests, such as X-rays and electrocardiograms before cataract surgery. Evidence shows that these tests

seldom yield any clinical benefit, yet more than 50,000 X-rays and 49,000 cardiograms were performed on patients about to undergo cataract surgery last year. You ask yourself, why?

0910

Yet while we have patients receiving tests they don't need on one hand, on the other hand, research shows that many Ontarians with diabetes and other chronic diseases are still not receiving all the care recommended by clinical guidelines. Why not? The answer, we need to be clear, has nothing to do with a lack of effort or a lack of caring. The health care providers in this province are as committed, compassionate and hard-working as anyone anywhere. But we have a health care culture where quality and value for money are not absolutely integral, as they should be.

Situations like the one I just cited arise because there is a lack of accountability for quality within the governance structures of our health care organizations. That is something we are determined to change. If there is a central message that I want to get across to my colleagues today, it is simply this: If we want a health care system that delivers the best possible care to patients today and is able to do so in the future, we have to act now. The action we have to take is to pass the Excellent Care for All bill that is in front of us.

In drafting this proposed legislation, we were informed and driven by four basic principles: Care must be organized around the patient to support his or her health; continuous quality improvement is a critical goal; payment, policy and planning must support both quality and the efficient use of our resources; and quality care must be supported by the very best evidence and standards of care. I defy a single member of this House or a single health care provider in this province to find fault with any one of these basic principles. If you can't find fault with any of those principles, I don't believe you can find fault with any of the changes that this legislation, if passed, would bring about in our health care system.

Health care organizations, beginning with hospitals, would have interprofessional quality committees that would report to the board of directors on quality-related issues. Every organization would have quality improvement plans publicly posted, and executive compensation would be linked to the achievements of outcomes identified in those plans. That would bring about a top-down focus on quality that would permeate the organization and drive better patient care in the future.

This legislation implements a patient relations process to address complaints and concerns. There would be regular patient-client-caregiver surveys, with publicly posted results. The results of those surveys would be used to inform the annual quality improvement plans.

We would also expand the mandate of the Ontario Health Quality Council to enable that body to provide recommendations on clinical practice guidelines for services delivered by health care providers, as well as recommendations on possible changes to the way health care is provided and paid for in our province. This would

help to ensure that future investments in health care get results and improve patient health, because that, as everyone in this room knows, is what it is all about: getting results and improving patient health. Quality and value: If you're not getting both, you're not getting either.

On the subject of changing the way health care is covered and paid for, there is one significant policy shift that our government is planning, and I want to speak about that here today. The plan is to gradually reform how hospitals are funded to better align funding with efficient delivery of high-quality patient care—to ensure, in other words, that money follows the patient. This is a necessary step. At present, the global funding system does not support quality improvement, and it does not reward efficient provisions of care. The fact is that, at present, financial incentives actually work against hospitals improving their quality and efficiency. Money does not follow the patient. A patient's choice of provider is not reflected in the funding that hospitals receive.

If we look around the world, we see that a great many jurisdictions have implemented patient-based payment approaches that allow for the incorporation of incentives for quality and productivity. In fact, nearly all developed nations use more advanced patient care funding approaches than we do here in Ontario. These approaches have proven successful in improving access and reducing wait times, and they've also increased hospital cost efficiency and transparency in terms of quality and quantity of services delivered.

Surely it's time we adopt these successful approaches here in Ontario. Surely it is time that we have transparency in terms of how much care should cost and why, based on good clinical evidence. Surely it is appropriate for us to have clear expectations about the quality and volume of services that hospitals are delivering, and that we receive value for our tax dollars. And surely it is appropriate for us to deliver more funding to hospitals that are delivering more services and higher-quality care to more patients.

I believe that something we share in this House is a commitment to better, more sustainable health care for Ontarians, pure and simple. It is something we all want. We might, sometimes, have different views about the best ways to get there, but other times, isn't it obvious? Isn't it obviously the right thing to do to eliminate inefficiency in our system? Isn't it obviously the right thing to do to eliminate waste? Isn't it obviously the right thing to do to instill in our health care organizations an absolute focus on quality and value for money? Of course it is. Of course it is the right thing to do to reward high-quality care, create a better patient experience and ensure the sustainability of a system we all cherish here in Ontario.

I said at the outset that this is the right piece of legislation at the right time for health care in Ontario. It deserves to be passed, and I would encourage everyone to support this piece of legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments?

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm pleased to rise to provide some comments to the member for Scarborough–Rouge River. I listened to his comments about quality and value, and also about accountability in this Excellent Care for All bill.

On Friday, I met with one of my constituents, Arnold Kilby from Lansdowne, who I think has emailed every member of this Legislature hundreds and hundreds of times with a concern about the system. His daughter, Terra Dawn Kilby, passed away in 2006, 12 hours after her release from a Toronto-area hospital. He has many unresolved issues with respect to the care she received in that hospital. I know that he's written to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and also to the Minister of Community Safety, expressing his concerns that the system let her down; that there wasn't an accountable system; that he can't seem to get answers on the fact that there should be things put in place at the hospital and in the health care system that make the government accountable for what happens at these facilities; and the fact that, in his case, with his daughter Terra Dawn, he still, three years after her death, cannot get answers from this government or from the hospital involved. You know, it's not an issue of taking the government to court. All he wants is a bill that puts some accountability back in the system and puts measures in place in hospitals that would ensure that what happened to him and his family never happens again.

I've looked at this bill, Bill 46. I looked at Hansard from yesterday, at what the minister said, and I don't see that this bill has that accountability for Arnold Kilby, that it has that accountability with a hospital so that it adequately addresses his concerns. I would like someone to address that at some point in the future.

0920

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I certainly was happy to listen to the comments from the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health this morning.

I want, first of all, to say that when I speak on a bill, I like to have read the whole bill. My technical briefing was at 3:30 yesterday. I was given part A and part B of the bill, which, with the bill itself, amounts to hundreds of pages of things to read. On Mondays I get up at 4 o'clock so that I can be here in time for question period, which means that last night at 10 o'clock, my eyes were crossed; I couldn't read anymore. So I was not able to read the whole bill. I don't understand why, when we're talking about accountability, when we're talking about doing things right, we have a bill that is introduced on Monday afternoon and we are debating it on Tuesday morning. A day to read all of those papers would certainly have been appreciated on my part.

From what I have read so far, I have lots and lots of questions. A lot of things have been put out without being defined. The first one that rings all sorts of alarm bells is that the money follows the patient. I've been in health care long enough to know that not every patient is

created equal. There are patients who are easy to handle and there are patients who take a little bit more care, knowledge and skill in order to be successful in their treatment. All I've read so far is that the money will follow the patient. This is very worrisome to me, and it should be worrisome to anybody who has a developmental delay, anybody who has a mental illness, anybody who needs a little extra care.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I listened carefully to my colleague the member from Scarborough–Rouge River as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health, and I want to congratulate him on his speech, because his speech outlines the vision of our government and the Ministry of Health for the future of health care in the province of Ontario.

Madam Speaker, all the people who are listening to us and all my colleagues from both sides of the House, everybody knows of our commitment to publicly funded, accessible health care in this province of Ontario. Also, the people of Ontario know exactly what we mean by that. We want every person who is facing some kind of health issue to be able to go to the hospital and see a doctor anytime, anywhere in the province of Ontario.

In the past, 20 years ago, we used to spend almost 32 cents of every dollar on health care. In this budget, 47% of our total budget goes to health care. If we grow in the same way, I guess in 12 years' time we're going to spend almost 70% of our budget on health care. Therefore, there won't be enough money for education, for roads, for recreation facilities, for our social agenda and for many different issues around the province of Ontario. I believe strongly that our government is trying to find a way to manage our spending on health care and, in the meantime, maintain the quality of health care in the province of Ontario.

That's why I believe that the Minister of Health and our government introduced such a bill, in order to see how we can manage health care in the province of Ontario and how we can maintain our ability to serve the great people of Ontario. We're facing challenges; there's no doubt about it. That's why we want to go to a creative way to make the doctors and hospitals more accessible and lower wait times in the hospitals. All of these elements are important for all the people in the province of Ontario. That's why I want to support the member from Scarborough–Rouge River for his excellent outlining of the vision of the government.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I did listen intently to the member from Scarborough–Rouge River, and I commend him for the goals, the laudable objective of the bill, for sure.

But the evidence on the ground is much different. What I'm hearing in my community, in the emergency rooms, from professional health care providers is quite the opposite. In fact, I can't explain this seemingly all-out war on front-line health care personnel. For instance, the

nurses who have been attacked in the Peterborough and Northumberland Hills Hospital recently are but two examples. But then last week in Bill 16 we had the pharmacists. Professional, young pharmacists from small communities within my riding were outraged at these assaults on that profession. It just doesn't add up with the objectives here.

This weekend, I was in a long-term-care facility and I noticed—because I'm there fairly regularly—a diminishment of the standards there. I think that even their bill on the retirement home provision is a way of slipping in another provider on the health care. There are people waiting for doctors. The evidence now is that they're forming these new types of family health networks or family health teams where they're rostering patients under a doctor so that they have a doctor, but now they're waiting longer to get to see the doctor. So the evidence on the ground is quite contrary to these goals.

The explanatory notes in the bill are worth looking at. There's a requirement for the Ontario health council, established under the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act, 2004, and these quality councils are going to be tied to the remuneration of the CEOs. Paying for results, I agree with. I think that's a laudable objective. But let's be honest about it: The patient, at the end of the day, is receiving less and paying more.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Scarborough—Rouge River has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I just want to thank my good friends from Leeds—Grenville, Nickel Belt, London—Fanshawe and Durham for their comments.

Let me just say to the member from Leeds—Grenville, this bill clearly introduces a standard patient relations process in all hospitals across the province. This is definitely a change, and it's a change for the good, I would say, to make a difference in our system. We clearly accept his comment that patients having difficulty in hospitals have found barriers in trying to get the answers they've been looking for, and certainly we believe this change will make a difference.

We all accept that we have a great system in Ontario. But if you remember, our government has spent a lot of money in the last couple of years improving the system that was lacking resources. Now that we've got our resources up to par, we're looking to see if we can build a system that is efficient and responsive to public demands and public needs, and we want to make sure that that system is transparent and accountable. This is why, in this bill, we're actually dealing with the issues. Patient care, patient services and performance in our hospitals will be tied in to the salary and compensation given to executives of those hospitals.

It's a definite change in the right direction. I think my friends across the way should really look at this as a move in the right direction to get some efficiency and make our system responsive to those people that we represent here in the Legislature.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'm pleased to rise today to outline the preliminary response of the Progressive Conservative caucus to Bill 46, An Act respecting the care provided by health care organizations, known by its short title as the Excellent Care for All Act, 2010. I do say "preliminary response," because this bill was only introduced in this Legislature yesterday afternoon, which was my first opportunity to see and to read it. Therefore, like the member from Nickel Belt, I did have a preliminary briefing with the ministry officials yesterday late in the afternoon, so I've not had the opportunity to speak with the many health care providers who will be affected by this legislation, nor have I had the time to review it in detail—all of which is more reason for having full hearings on this matter and consulting widely on the bill, not just to pay lip service to consultation, as this government so often does.

I also should add that I'm a little bit surprised that the Minister of Health herself hasn't chosen to speak on second reading of this bill. This is a little bit surprising, given the apparent importance of this bill.

Before I begin my comments with respect to the specifics of the bill, let me say that the PC caucus is fully aware of the current pressures on our health care system. We realize that right now, 46 cents of every tax dollar is spent on health care. This is scheduled to reach 50 cents within the next few years and will rise up to 70 cents on each tax dollar within the next 12 years if nothing is done. Clearly, this present system is not sustainable, and something has to be done, but what should that be?

0930

The fact of the matter is there are very few choices here. No one wants to pay higher taxes. We are already paying a separate tax for health; \$15 billion so far, in fact, has been paid. Whether or not we have a better health care system—I would certainly say, no—as a result of that is a question for another day. We also don't want to cut back on health care services and programs because we know that with the boomer tsunami coming within the next few years, we're going to have more and more baby boomers—myself included—needing more and more health care programs and services. So now is certainly not the time to be cutting back.

One solution I would suggest, and this is being reflected in the government's bill, is that we need to spend smarter and not necessarily more on health care. This bill purports to do this, but I would say that if the McGuinty Liberals are serious about finding these efficiencies in our health care system, then they need to take a look in the mirror with respect to their record in a number of other areas. They have a pretty sorry record when it comes to finding efficiencies.

Let's take a look at a few examples. Number one, the McGuinty government has been caught raiding hospital budgets to pay the half-million-dollar salary of the former deputy health minister. Number two, they've spent \$176 million at the local health integration networks with no improvement in front-line health care—nothing to show for it. And e-health: Need I say more? A billion

precious health care dollars wasted with no electronic health care records in sight and not even on the immediate horizon, while we're being surpassed by other Canadian provinces and many other countries around the world. The e-health records are absolutely essential for us to be able to move forward into the world of 21st-century medicine. They're necessary for better patient outcomes to prevent toxic drug interactions and patient deaths every year. They're needed in order to find true efficiencies in the system. We're clearly failing in this respect.

Transparency and accountability, clearly, are not hallmarks of this government. Before having the same expectations of our health care organizations, the McGuinty Liberals need to get their own house in order.

In any event, our review of this bill indicates there are three major objectives in the overall plan to strengthen the focus on quality, value and evidence-based health care in Ontario. They are as follows: first, a change in the funding model for hospitals; second, an increased emphasis on continuous quality improvement as a means of reducing costs and improving patient outcomes; third, a focus on evidence-based guidelines that health care providers should adopt.

In principle, the PC caucus agrees with these objectives, subject to a number of caveats that I will raise as I deal with each objective in turn.

First, essentially this bill will substantially change the hospital funding model, moving away from global block budgets and towards pay-for-performance and patient-based funding. As I've indicated, in theory, the Progressive Conservative caucus supports this move.

In April 2004, the Ontario Hospital Association released a report entitled *Advancing Accountability Through Hospital Funding Reform: A Policy Framework to Promote Greater Access, Efficiency and Quality of Care*. It's a pity that the McGuinty Liberals sat on this report for some six years before bringing this matter forward, but I suppose better late than never.

As in many other areas, Ontario lags behind many other developed countries of the world and, in fact, other Canadian provinces, including British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and New Brunswick, in bringing forward these reforms. In those international jurisdictions where variations of patient-based funding have been introduced, including the United States, England, all of western Europe and Australia, significant benefits have been realized. Using this system has led to improved access and decreased wait times, improved efficiency, improved quality of care and increased patient choice in where they receive care.

Three funding models will be used to drive these reforms: the health-based allocation model, the patient-focused funding model and the pay-for-performance model. The bill proposes, with the new payment system, to deliver transparency in how much care should cost, based on clinical evidence; clear expectations of the volume of services to be provided; and more volume and funding for hospitals that deliver high-quality care.

This last point raises serious concerns about how the Ministry of Health will deal with small rural and northern hospitals, which simply won't be able to achieve the volumes that might entitle them to receive additional funding. The minister has indicated that this new funding model will not apply to these hospitals, but the devil is in the details, and we are anxious to hear about what the cut-off will be and what the minister will offer as a fair and reasonable solution to these hospitals to allow them to continue to stay in business and be able to compete with their larger counterparts.

Secondly, the bill will attempt to move towards a continuous quality control plan and intends to tie executive compensation to achievement of the plan. Again, these are laudable goals, and the PC Party supports them in principle because we know that every year, thousands of Ontarians are readmitted to hospital for unforeseen complications within 30 days of their original discharge. I believe the parliamentary assistant mentioned that there were a total of 140,000 patients in this predicament last year alone. The evidence strongly supports a focus on quality as a means to lower health care spending by reducing readmissions and eliminating unnecessary tests and procedures. More importantly, patient outcomes and satisfaction also improve.

What does the bill contain that will purport to achieve these goals? Well, the bill requires each health care organization to establish a quality control committee that will set out annual performance improvement targets and the justification for those targets, and set out information with respect to the manner in and the extent to which health care executive compensation is linked to achievement of these targets. If requested by the relevant local health integration network, or LHIN, the health care organization shall provide the LHIN with a draft form of the annual quality improvement plan for review before the plan is released to the public. It is important to note that this plan will be available for public review and scrutiny.

The first question that I asked during the briefing that I had with the Ministry of Health yesterday afternoon was, "How are you going to tie executive compensation to the success of the quality improvement plan? That's a pretty tall order." I was advised that the Ministry of Health doesn't want to over-regulate, wants to leave it up to local governments, and will essentially leave this to the discretion of the local hospital board to determine. I'm a little concerned about this, because I'm not sure that all hospital boards will have all of the information necessary in order to be able to deal with this and may not wish to deal with this directly, but I certainly look forward to the committee hearings on this bill to clarify this and, certainly, a number of other issues related to this quality control issue.

I'm told that the new policy will be based on consultations and simulations with hospitals, LHINs and stakeholders. The simulations, I think, will be particularly important, where they will actually be put into practice in local hospitals. I do believe this is essential in order to be

able to ensure that we understand all of the parameters of this policy and that all of the local hospitals are going to be in a position to make sure that whatever they implement will actually achieve the quality control that they're trying to achieve. Again, this is an essential thing that I believe needs to be dealt with, both in committee and with the consultations and simulations with the stakeholders, because this is too important to get wrong.

Finally, the bill proposes to expand the functions of the Ontario Health Quality Council to include promoting evidence-based health care and clinical best practices. Again, how can you argue against that? The Progressive Conservative caucus supports this proposal in principle as long as it is truly used by the Ministry of Health to share and promote best practices, leading to excellent patient care, and not simply as a means to cut costs that has everything to do with funding quick and easy financial efficiencies and nothing to do with enhancing patient care and improving outcomes.

0940

We've seen this government do this before. The truth is that there are no quick and easy solutions in health care anymore. Efficiencies have already been obtained and anything that we do in order to change anything in our health care system is going to need to be based absolutely on best practices and recognizing that you can't take money out of a system, as we've recently seen with the pharmacists, where the government has attempted to take \$750 million out of our health care system by eliminating the front-line care that our pharmacists provide, pretending that there aren't going to be any ramifications of that. Clearly, we know that there will be, that the \$100 million that the government is offering in return isn't going to go nearly far enough to allow the pharmacists to be able to continue to deliver the wonderful care that they do to patients across the province of Ontario.

We've also seen it, as the member from Durham has pointed out, with the cutting of nurses in hospitals and health care organizations across the province of Ontario. This is a sign of a system that's deeply under strain. We need to make sure that we do this right.

We do have a lot of significant concerns. We do support the goals, in principle, that the government is putting forward. We probably will have some further questions and concerns with respect to the implementation of these goals and how this is going to be put into practice.

I urge the government to allow full and complete consultation on these and other issues to make sure that we understand the full parameters of this as a Legislature and that all stakeholders are given the opportunity to fully comment on this as we go forward.

Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to at least raise a few preliminary points.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

M^{me} France G  linas: I will start by echoing what the member has just said, that to have an introduction of a supposedly very important bill on Monday afternoon and

second reading on Tuesday morning presents some challenges. The bill is considerable. It touches on a number of different legislations and could be interpreted in many different ways if you don't have time to do the full reading and fully understand what it is that they're trying to do. This is a little bit problematic.

I would like to pick up on the accountability that the member has been talking about. We all agree that we want more accountability. The sunshine list has shown us that we now have a \$700,000 club in Ontario. Some of the hospital CEOs who were present when the minister made her announcement publicly yesterday are people who are paid \$800,000 a year to be a CEO of a hospital. I have a hard time with this when we talk about a bill that is talking about accountability in the health care system and you have a Minister of Health who is silent on this.

Can I remind the people of Ontario that Premier McGuinty makes \$208,000 a year? That's his salary plus benefits, and he manages a budget of close to \$100 billion. Yet we have people, paid by our taxes, who make four times the salary of our Premier and manage 1% or 2% of the budget that he manages. Why, when we talk about accountability, doesn't the Minister of Health say clearly that this is not acceptable and that things have to change? We're now tying salaries with—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Comments and questions?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I'm happy to provide a few comments to the member from Whitby—Oshawa on this particular bill.

Let me make it very clear: The minister spoke yesterday and clearly indicated that our funding model was not working. I know she's expressed some concern about funds following the patient and she's worried that the current system is based on a global budget.

Let me just repeat what the minister said yesterday. She said, "Our current funding model penalizes hospitals when their volumes increase. Global budgets deliver a set amount of money for a year, and any increase in the number of patients coming into the hospital is a cost or financial liability. The result is that hospitals may delay or deny care in order to balance their budgets." That's not an efficient system; that's not a system that responds to public needs. Therefore, this bill is introducing a different model of funding that will respond to public needs, and I hope I can convince the member on the other side that this is the right thing to do.

On top of that, the bill is based on four very positive, strong pillars: clinical practice guidelines, evidence-based health care, a patient relations process that is standard across the province—and I would have to say the minister commented yesterday that we do have a concern about small and rural hospitals, but certainly, if you look at the four pillars, those rural and small hospitals can also benefit from those small efficiency changes.

Hopefully, everything will work well in the future. I certainly believe it can.

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm pleased to provide some comments in regard to the address made by my colleague the

member for Whitby–Oshawa. I want to echo her comments about the fact that this bill was just presented yesterday. Certainly, from our caucus' perspective, we've barely had a chance to talk about it in this Legislature, let alone as a caucus. I appreciate some of the comments that my colleague has brought forward to the Legislature today.

My first day in the Legislature, I talked about the concern in my community in regard to the Brockville General Hospital with the front-line health care cuts that they have been forced to make because of this government: bed closures, nursing layoffs. As well, later on in my first day, I talked about the Brockville Mental Health Centre; the fact that, again, front-line mental health services are leaving our community to go to Ottawa, and all of that expertise that has been there for a century is lost.

The member for Scarborough–Rouge River talked about quality and value. You have to just pick up a newspaper or to listen to concerns in local communities about the health care sector. To my colleague from Peterborough, the Peterborough Examiner this morning talks about city council wanting the LHIN to report on the hospital bed closures and the job cuts. They want those jobs and health services protected in their communities. As well, you can look at the North Bay Nugget where their council is expressing concerns about psychiatric transfers from North Bay to Sudbury.

These local health integration networks can almost be called local health disintegration networks because of the concern that they're raising throughout communities without any accountability. We've talked over and over about their lack of accountability. Again, I want to challenge those on the other side to deal with that as well.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: I'd like to first of all just state, both as a physician as well as a legislator, that I think we can quite reasonably say that the health of the body, like the health care system itself, is always a work in progress. I'm quite proud to be part of a government that not only invests but takes seriously the mandate that we've received from the people now twice, possibly a third time, with regard to the maintenance, strengthening and fortification of our health care system.

There are a number of different options. Given the expense, given the rising costs, the exponential annual increases, we could adopt, as some governments around the world have done, the privatization of it, the selling of health care as a profit centre, making it a source of income for for-profit corporations, but that's not really the mandate.

As we seek to strengthen public education, we seek, also, to strengthen public health care. That's, of course, why we're attempting to institute all these various changes, bringing to light and essentially inviting physicians and other health care practitioners to practise evidence-based medicine, as well as something called clinical practice guidelines. These are basically the best and brightest suggestions and protocols for a whole long list of diseases. The problem, of course, is that it's so

complex and there are such a number of them that we now have guidelines to the guidelines. There's something, for example, on the order of about 1,500 different clinical practice guidelines, as we speak, for every disease that you can name and then some.

0950

It's in order to engage our communities and, yes, to engage the LHINs, our hospital boards in, of course, the broader conversation with Ontarians that we need to move forward with this particular bill. I'm honoured and pleased to support our Minister of Health.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Whitby–Oshawa has two minutes to respond.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'd like to thank the members from Nickel Belt, Scarborough–Rouge River, Leeds–Grenville and Etobicoke North for their comments.

The member from Nickel Belt spoke of accountability and the need to ensure that hospital executives also heed this and had some concerns with respect to their compensation. I think we need to bear that in mind, certainly, as we go forward. That is something that we want to make sure is held in check as appropriate.

The member from Scarborough–Rouge River talked about the funding model not working. I would certainly agree, but I still do have residual concerns with respect to the plight of small and rural hospitals. How will you define a small hospital? What will be the cut-off? What will be the solution for them? It's not just large hospitals we're speaking about here; we're speaking about hospitals across the board. They all need to be given a fair opportunity in order to be able to operate their organizations.

The member from Leeds–Grenville mentioned his concerns about decisions that are being made by LHINs, particularly with respect to mental health decisions and closing organizations and programs that have been in operation for many, many years. I share those concerns.

Finally, the member from Etobicoke North spoke about a number of things, including the need to move to evidence-based medicine and clinical practice guidelines to achieve excellent patient care. I would certainly agree with that.

He also spoke of his party's commitment to strengthen public health care. I must reiterate, on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus, that we also agree that one of the most fundamental aspects of our health care system that differentiates us as Canadians and that we're all proud of is that we too believe in universal access to a publicly funded health care system that provides excellent health care to all Ontarians.

I thank all of the members for their comments and look forward to further debate and consultation on this matter.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Certainly New Democrats support a universal, high-quality public medicare system. We support a program where people's needs decide the care they get, not the size of their wallet. We support

excellence in quality of care and we welcome changes that would lead to better health care and health outcomes for all Ontarians.

There are some positive aspects of the bill. I'm not sure I will have time to talk about them today, but in my hour lead I certainly will cover some of the very positive aspects of the bill, some of them having to do with the expansion of the mandate of the Ontario Health Quality Council, the development of best practices and the development of clinical practice guidelines.

There are some good initiatives in there, but there are also very many opportunities lost. One of the big issues that I have been worried about and that we have brought forward a number of times is the exponential growth of hospital executive salaries under this government. I've talked about the sunshine list and the \$700,000 club, where this club is filled with hospital presidents and CEOs whose salaries have grown by 7% in 2009—the heart of the recession, the reason that motivated the government to put a two-year cap on the salary of everybody who is not unionized. Yet hospital CEOs are not unionized and in 2009 they got a 7% increase.

Name me any other group of workers in this province, first of all, who make over \$700,000. There are pretty few. Even if you look at the ordinary guy who makes \$30,000 to \$50,000 a year, no workers' group got a 7% increase in 2009, but the CEOs, the people at the top, did. Since the McGuinty government has been in power, their wages have increased by 40%. This is a lot of money, especially when you're already at the top, but there's nothing in this bill that would curb this.

To tie their salary to performance is not the same thing as sending a clear message by the Minister of Health that the \$700,000 club is not acceptable in this province. She should send the clear message that those wages have to be rolled back, and if the board of directors of the hospital is not willing to act upon this, then she should send a clear cap—that we are not willing to spend that amount of money on CEO executives while our health care system is short of money in so many areas.

So in Bill 46, the bill we're talking about, we do not see anything that will curb those excesses. The Minister of Health had assured Ontarians that she was concerned with the excess of executive salaries, and now she tells us that this bill is not making any progress in pressing the issue forward. I have quotes from the minister that say, "I would like to assure the member opposite"—she was talking to me at the time—"that I share her concern about hospital CEO compensation. I think Ontarians are concerned about that as well"—I'd say she is right—"especially when so many of them are struggling to make ends meet. That is why we will be introducing legislation that will make those health care executives more accountable for improving the quality of the services in their institutions." We all agreed that this is excessive, but we don't agree to do something about it.

I believe that the minister should take steps in this regard. New Democrats believe that you cannot assure quality care while allowing such a high percentage of precious health care dollars to flow to executives.

I also have serious concerns about the failure to implement transparency and accountability initiatives. In the bill, we see nothing that would put a hospital under the freedom of access to information request. I understand that there are some privacy concerns when it comes to your particular medical chart, but this is not what we're talking about; we're talking about being able to ask for a freedom-of-information request as to how much money was spent on consultants. Why isn't that information available to people? How come our hospitals, which account for—something around \$20 billion of taxpayer expenses are spent through our hospitals, yet they are under a cloud of secrecy. They are not covered by the freedom of access to information. We cannot know how our taxpayers' dollars are being spent. We know in general terms how much on salaries, how much on operations, how much on capital; that does not answer fundamental questions as to how our hospitals are governed and operated.

They've also put forward what they call a patient relations process. I think this is a fancy word to say a complaint mechanism—that is, if the patient is not happy about what's happening, every hospital in Ontario has a complaint mechanism that is a set of steps that you have to go through to get your complaint answered. I was told some hospitals do very good at it, some of them not as good, but they all have one.

If you have a complaint, you go to your hospital. If you are not happy with the way they've handled your complaint or with the results of that complaint mechanism, what do people in Ontario do? They phone the Ombudsman. They phone the Ombudsman, who is this neutral third party who has the knowledge and skills to investigate complaints. This is why we have an Ombudsman in Ontario, so that we have an independent third party who has the ability to investigate complaints. And he has done a fantastic job. He has brought forward to us systemic discrimination issues that we didn't know existed. Because of the good job that he has done, he has motivated change, and I would say that because of his work, the working of the Ontario government has improved.

1000

So what does the minister do? Right now, I want everybody to know that the Ombudsman is not allowed to investigate complaints in a hospital. People call him, and he will tell you that they log the complaints. They have hundreds—some 360 complaints last year alone from people who have called the Ombudsman because they had a complaint in the hospital. They had gone through the complaint-handling process of the hospital and were not satisfied. They called the Ombudsman, and what did the Ombudsman do? He said, "I'm sorry. The government does not allow me to investigate complaints in a hospital."

So I was all happy that we are putting forward a patient relations process. "Finally, the Ombudsman will have jurisdiction over a hospital, because this is what we want." But no; that won't be the case. We will have some

kind of an internal process which, in my view, already exists. It certainly exists in any of the hospitals that I have been in contact with—and I've been in contact with many. Now we are going to make it law that something that already exists should exist, but we're not going to change it and give the people of Ontario the access that they want, which is access to the Ombudsman, when the internal process has not been successful. I would say, why are we doing this, again? It's something that already exists. The people have already told you what they want, but you're not giving them what they want. It's not exactly what I had in mind when I was hoping for more oversight of our hospitals.

Ombudsman oversight is a fundamental tool that Ontarians need. This bill will give us a patient relations process that the vast majority of hospitals already have in place, but what happens when your complaint cannot be solved internally? The answer is, absolutely nothing. It will end there. Ontarians still won't have anywhere to turn to, and Bill 46 is not going to open the door for Ombudsman oversight of hospitals.

Another area of worry for me is, we are concerned about the interprofessional advisory committee that will look into the continuous quality improvement process. I must say that continuous quality improvement is not something new. I remember, about 20 years ago, I was on my hospital's continuous quality improvement committee. It was headed by a person named Marielle Hortness. I worked at Laurentian Hospital, which is now part of Sudbury Regional Hospital. I can tell you that I have left the hospital, but 20 years later, Mrs. Hortness is still there, and the continuous quality improvement committee is still there. They have done some good work. They have brought forward some innovative ideas, they have motivated change; they have done some good things. So here again: not exactly a new idea. Those committees have been in our hospitals for the last 20 years. We are bringing them forward as if all of a sudden we are making a 90% shift towards quality improvement. Quality improvement has been in our hospitals. It has been part of our health care system for a long time. It has made strides forward.

So when they talk about wanting a culture change, I'm all for change. I think that, yes, there is a need for improvement, but where is this fundamental spark that says, "Here is change. Here is something that we've never done before that will completely change the path of our health care system so that we will be driven by quality"? When we bring forward something like continuous quality improvement, which has been in place for 20 years, what am I missing here? Where is the spark? Where is the motivation to do things differently?

We've talked about clinical practice guidelines and best practices. I agree with my colleagues that best practices and clinical practice guidelines are the way to go. We now have a system in place that is driven by volume. In the hospital sector, we say the physician brings the water to the mill. The hospital, being the mill, has to process that water. Hospitals have very little control as to

how many patients come through their door, how many procedures the physicians order etc.

We presently have a system that is driven by volume, and some of the experiments of the past to try to decrease volume have not been successful at all. When we look at what happened in the 1990s when the Tories were in power, we looked at a decrease in the volumes that the hospitals were able to do. This continued through all of the McGuinty years. What happened out of this? We got waiting lists. We got procedures that were no longer available. We got people looking elsewhere at a private system to jump the queue and make things happen faster. None of this is good, and none of this leads to increased quality care.

I can tell you that the government often boasts about their family health teams. The health quality council in their last report had a focus on primary care. They said clearly that most of the cases in primary care have to do with chronic disease management, diseases such as diabetes, asthma and high blood pressure, diseases that people have and will have to manage for a long time. That accounts for close to 80% of the visits to a primary care provider. The health quality council also said the best way to deal with chronic disease management is through an interdisciplinary team approach, and they had some brilliant examples of what is happening right here right now in Ontario in our community health centre model that has an interdisciplinary team model. Then the government comes forward with their family health teams.

They give the name "teams," but don't be fooled. If you look at the physicians that work in family health teams, we'll put it at about 10,000 just to make the numbers easy, and look at every single other primary care provider that works in a family health team—we're talking about nurse practitioners, nurses, RNAs, dieticians, social workers, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, psychologists, chiropractors—all of those professionals put together, you won't come up to 10,000. We don't even have a dyad here, never mind a team. A team approach would be a physician who works with a nurse practitioner, a nurse, a social worker, a dietician, a health promoter, a physiotherapist. Let's say you do have 10,000 physicians; you should have about 60,000 of all of the rest of them put together. That would be a family health team, wouldn't it? You would have a physician working as part of a team. That is not what we have in family health teams at all. It doesn't even resemble a team.

What it is is an alternate payment plan. Let's call it what it is. I have no problem with putting an alternate payment plan out there for family physicians. More power to them; they seem to like it. A lot of family physicians are joining those teams.

But to say that a family health team is an interdisciplinary care model is not true. It is, at best, a stretch. Are there some exceptions out there? Yes, there are some exceptions. There are community-based family health teams out there that have put together a team where a

physician has the opportunity to work with a nutritionist, a chiroprapist, a social worker and a nurse. There are some that are successful, but if you look at 175 or thereabout family health teams out there, a lot of them are not teams at all.

Here we have the health quality council. They have already done the work on primary care; they have already said what the best practice would be. The Minister of Health and the Ministry of Health bought it hook, line, and sinker and thought that teams are really the way to provide primary care in Ontario; this is the way we should do things. Then you look at the implementation and you see that they can talk about family health teams all they want and give them the name they want, but they are a far cry from being a team. I'm a little bit sheepish as to: What is going to be the difference now?

1010

The Ontario Health Quality Council will continue to do their excellent work, like they have done in the past. They will continue to tell the truth about what constitutes best practices in health and what doesn't, and they will be able to do this and demonstrate that clearly. They will put forward a tool box and ways of implementation. And then this won't apply to the little, wee part that is called primary care in Ontario anymore; it will apply to this great big mammoth health expenditure that we call hospitals.

If we look at the amount of success that this government has had in primary care, and we say, "Well, the same agencies did the recommendation. They followed the same pattern of focusing on best practices, and here's the result that we got," and here's the same recipe that is being followed to change the hospital system, allow me to be a bit skeptical that we're actually going to see any change here.

Two of the fundamental pillars of their reform are fundamentally good. Continuous quality improvement: Who would disagree with this? But this is not a leverage for change. Continuous quality improvement has been in our hospitals for a long time. The second one will be driven by clinical practice guidelines and best practices. A second pillar of what they see in this new bill is something that exists in other parts of the health care system, in a much more manageable part of the health care system, and yet the results are not there. The results are far from an implementation of a best practice that has been documented and scientifically backed.

Here they are following the same recipe book. If you do the same thing, what would lead you to believe that you will get a different result? I saw what happened in primary care and the results were not an interdisciplinary team-based approach to manage chronic disease, like the health quality council wanted. So here we have the same recipe being followed, but now in the hospital sector. What would lead me to believe that we will now have success with that? I hope it's in the pages of the bill that I haven't had time to read, because so far, in the parts that I have read, none of this is covered. None of this is there to give us a sense that we have success coming.

I see that I only have five minutes, and this stresses me to the utmost. I still have lots to say, but I don't have very much time. I'm wondering where I should go next.

Let's talk a little bit about the declaration of values. I agree that when you talk about governance, when you talk about fixing strategic objectives, the best way to motivate any organization is to have a good set of values that will basically ground the organization in the population they serve and help the entire collective of the organization. Whether they are the workers, the physicians, the midwives, the nurse practitioners, the volunteers or the patients themselves, a good set of values is something that ignites people, that motivates them, that moves them forward. It is something that our hospitals all have. If you go into any hospital in Ontario, whether you're in the elevator, in the bathrooms or in the hallway, you will see their set of values posted out there for everybody to read, for everybody to be motivated by and for everybody to join.

So here again, in section 7, it says that it would require that every health care organization develop a patient declaration of values and make it available to the public. Those are all things that exist. We are surrounded by hospitals where we are. Go down University Avenue, walk into any one of those mega-hospitals we have down here, go into any washroom or any elevator and you will see that they all have a set of values. They have a mission, they have a vision, and they share it with everybody. So what's so revolutionary in what we have now?

I'm out of time. I can see you coming up.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The time has come to recess until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'd like to welcome to the gallery the sister of page Joshua Rossetti, Olivia Rossetti, who's here today from my riding in Etobicoke-Lakeshore.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: I'd like to introduce Laila Alaichi, mother of page Jacob Alaichi, who's with us here this morning.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to introduce in the west gallery Steve Miazga. He's the Hamilton Conservation Authority CAO; Brad Clark isn't here with us; Rita Giulietti, press secretary for Friends of the Eramosa Karst; and Tom Zietsma, board member, Friends of the Eramosa Karst. Thanks for coming.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Given that today is World Asthma Day, I am especially delighted to introduce Christine Hampson, the president and CEO of the Asthma Society of Canada; Joanne Di Nardo from the Ontario Lung Association; and Carole Madeley from the Ontario Lung Association. Welcome to you all.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I would like to welcome to the Legislature grade 5 students from the Edenrose Public School. They will be here shortly.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: Canadian and Lithuanian soldiers are fighting today as partners against terrorism in Afghanistan. The members of the trade delegation from Lithuania in the east gallery are also looking for Canadian partners, but in the information and communications technology sector. Since the ICT sector is a major driver of both of our economies, we welcome these CEOs and presidents and wish them the best of luck. They are being led by Vilija Jatkonienė—

Applause.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: Well, they're already clapping; that's great.

They are being led by Vilija Jatkonienė from the Embassy of the Republic of Lithuania. Welcome, and we hope for the very best of luck to you.

Mr. Rick Johnson: I would like to welcome Blake Frazer from Kawartha Dairy, in my riding. He will be serving ice cream this afternoon at the Alliance of Ontario Food Processors reception.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome our new group of pages and allow them to assemble for introduction.

Jacob Alaichi, Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale; Emma Allen, Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound; Nirosha Balakumar, Scarborough–Guildwood; Vrajesh Dave, Mississauga–Streetsville; Rhett Figliuzzi, Guelph; Luke Goralczyk, Leeds–Grenville; Tristen Groves, Parkdale–High Park; Michelle Hendriks, Sarnia–Lambton; Sarah Klapman, Trinity–Spadina; Michelle Lutsch, Essex; Mary McPherson, Thunder Bay–Atikokan; Ana Méndez, Wellington–Halton Hills; Lars Moffatt, Algoma–Manitowlin; Nicole Pal, Eglinton–Lawrence; Caroline Robertson, Ottawa–Vanier; Joshua Rossetti, Etobicoke–Lakeshore; Yidu Sun, Windsor West; Dylan Thompson, Burlington; Stig Tripp, Northumberland–Quinte West; and Katina Zheng, Mississauga East–Cooksville. Welcome to our new group of pages.

MEMBERS' PRIVILEGES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On March 25, 2010, shortly after the House had resumed meeting at 4 p.m., the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, Mr. Yakabuski, rose on a point of order just after the Minister of Finance had moved the budget motion but before the pages had begun delivering the budget papers to members in the chamber. The member indicated that members of the official opposition who were in the budget lock-up had not been allowed to leave the lock-up in a timely manner and that they were still on their way to the legislative chamber. The member from Wellington–Halton Hills, Mr. Arnott, added that the reason for the delay was that the Ontario Provincial Police were waiting to

hear from the office of the Minister of Finance before releasing members from the lock-up. Members will recall that I delayed proceedings for a few moments so that more members could arrive, after which the budget papers were tabled and distributed to members and the Minister of Finance presented the budget.

On April 6, I received from the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka, Mr. Miller, a notice of intention to raise a point of privilege, and on April 12, the member raised a point of privilege on this matter in the House. In the notice and in his oral submissions, the member invited the Speaker to find that a *prima facie* case of privilege had been established on the basis that members of the official opposition were physically obstructed, impeded and interfered with when they tried to make their way to the chamber for the budget presentation. According to the member, this obstruction occurred against the members' wills and contrary to the lock-up protocol issued by the Ministry of Finance. The member for Welland, Mr. Kormos, the government House leader, Ms. Smith, and the member from Whitby–Oshawa, Mrs. Elliott, also spoke to the matter at the time. I also received written submissions from the government House leader, the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka and the member from Welland.

Having had the opportunity to review the notice, our Hansard, the written submissions and the relevant precedents and authorities, I will now rule on the matter.

First, dealing with the issue of timeliness raised by the government House leader, I will say that the procedural authorities, but not standing order 21(b), indicate that members should raise points of privilege in a timely manner. In the case at hand, the matter was initially raised in the House within minutes of the members being released from the lock-up. Admittedly, it was raised at the time on a point of order as opposed to a point of privilege, but it cannot be denied that the matter was brought to the attention of the House within minutes of the member's release from the lock-up. Given the time it can take to prepare a meaningful, comprehensive notice of a point of privilege and that the Easter long weekend and a constituency week intervened during this period, I cannot say that the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka failed to exercise due diligence in raising his point of privilege.

1040

The second consideration in this matter is the issue of whether the alleged interference prevented members from attending their parliamentary work. According to the procedural authorities and many previous Speakers' rulings, parliamentary privilege protects members in the execution of their strictly parliamentary duties, not the constituency or other duties that may be fairly said to be part of their job descriptions. On this point, the second edition of Maingot's *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada* states on pages 222 to 223, "The interference, however, must not only obstruct the member in his capacity as a member, it must obstruct or allege to obstruct the member in his parliamentary work." The demarcation between

members' parliamentary and non-parliamentary duties that Maingot addresses is important, because the members of the official opposition who were in the lock-up did not want to leave the lock-up in order to attend to their constituency or other non-parliamentary duties; they wanted to leave the lock-up in order to make their way to the precincts and, in particular, to attend and participate in the parliamentary proceedings. Those members who spoke to or made a written submission on the point of privilege raised by the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka did not dispute this important point.

Let me say a few words about budget lock-ups. For many decades, the government of the day has allowed members and the media an opportunity to preview the budget papers and receive a briefing on the budget in secure facilities in the hours preceding the presentation of the budget in the House. Access to the lock-up is conditional on agreeing to the terms and conditions of the lock-up protocol. Members are generally amenable to these restrictions on their personal liberty because the preview and briefing facilitate their parliamentary duties and enable members of the Legislative Assembly to hold the government of the day to account.

In the case at hand, there is no issue taken with the protocol set out for the lock-up itself. Indeed, it seems clear that if the terms of the protocol had been followed and members released in time to make their way to this chamber for the start of proceedings, we might not be dealing with this point of privilege at all. Let me be clear: We are concerned here with an allegation that certain members were obstructed in their attempt to leave the lock-up at a time when they should reasonably have expected to be allowed to leave in order to attend the proceedings of the House.

This brings me to the nub of the point of privilege raised: that is, the right of members of this Legislative Assembly to attend to their parliamentary duties without interference or obstruction. I note that the House of Commons Procedure and Practice states the following: "In circumstances where members claim to be physically obstructed, impeded, interfered with or intimidated in the performance of their parliamentary functions, the Speaker is apt to find that a prima facie breach of privilege has occurred."

The case before me is one in which members are indeed claiming they were prevented from getting to the legislative chamber, thereby obstructing them in their performance of their parliamentary duties. Moreover, the government House leader acknowledges that members of the official opposition were detained in the lock-up longer than they should have been. Specifically, she says that members were delayed by OPP personnel. But the government House leader says that in mitigation, members were in the chamber when the budget was presented. This contention presumes that it is more important that members be in the chamber for the presentation of the budget than for moving the budget motion itself or for any other proceeding. I cannot agree with such a presumption, because it would require the Speaker to accede

to the questionable proposition that some parliamentary proceedings are more important than others and that members should not get worked up about missing the so-called less important parliamentary proceedings. It is not the responsibility of the Speaker to slice and dice proceedings in Parliament. To my mind, it is for individual members—not the Speaker, not the government, not security personnel—to decide whether they should be in the chamber for the moving of a budget motion, the tabling of the budget, the presentation of the budget or all of them.

In the case at hand, there appears to be no disputing that some members of the official opposition missed the moving of the budget motion, that they missed it because they were not released from the lock-up in a timely manner and that, had I not delayed proceedings for a few moments shortly after 4 p.m. on budget day, they might have missed part of the budget presentation itself.

For a prima facie case of privilege to be established, it is enough to ascertain that members wanted to attend the House and were, at least for a time and against their will, prevented from doing so. It is of no significance where such—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order.

It is of no significance where such an obstruction occurred or what parliamentary proceeding members were prevented from attending.

Further investigation may well reveal a plausible explanation or mitigating circumstances for what occurred in the budget lock-up on March 25, but I do believe that such a further investigation is warranted.

I find, therefore, that a prima facie case of privilege has been established, and, as there has been some confusion in the past, I want to clarify what this finding means.

Maingot states: "A prima facie case of privilege in the parliamentary sense is one where the evidence on its face as outlined by the member is sufficiently strong for the House to be asked to debate the matter and send it to a committee to investigate whether the privileges of the House have been breached or a contempt has occurred and report to the House."

"While the Speaker may find that a prima facie case of privilege exists and give the matter precedence in debate, it is the House alone that decides whether a breach of privilege or a contempt has occurred, for only the House has the power to commit or punish for contempt."

In short, a prima facie finding by the Speaker does not mean that the Speaker has found anyone guilty of such an allegation. Rather, "prima facie" means that the Speaker has determined that on the face of it, the information presented points toward the likelihood that a breach of privilege has occurred, and that it is in the interests of the House to give priority consideration to such a serious matter, and for a parliamentary committee to inquire into it.

When he raised this matter on April 12, the member for Parry Sound-Muskoka indicated that he was prepared to move a motion to refer the matter to a legislative

committee. Having now found that there is a *prima facie* case to investigate, I will call on the member to move his motion. Pursuant to standing order 21(b), this debatable motion, upon being moved, has precedence and will displace the consideration of regular business until it is disposed of.

In closing, I want to thank the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka, the member for Welland, the government House leader, and the member for Whitby–Oshawa for speaking to this matter. I also want to thank the government House leader, the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka and the member for Welland for their written submissions.

Mr. Norm Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your thoughtful deliberations.

I move that the matter of the delayed release of certain members of this House from the March 25, 2010, budget lock-up be referred to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly for its consideration.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Miller has moved that this matter be referred to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly. Further debate?

Mr. Norm Miller: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for first of all ruling and allowing the committee to look further into this matter. I'll certainly be looking for—because we aren't usually successful with these matters—the table's assistance as to what happens next.

I think it important that the members of the Legislature be able to carry out their business in a free and open manner. On the day of the budget lock-up, we took on a new tactic for that day and that was we that had all of our caucus in for the budget lock-up so that they might be able to take more time to review the budget prior to the actual speech being given, and thereby able to be right up to speed on it and be able to analyze the budget more fully and provide a critical analysis of the budget.

On that particular day, taking this new strategy, which was to have pretty much our whole caucus—

Mr. Peter Kormos: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock, please.

Mr. Peter Kormos: My apologies to the speaker. Speaker, this is a very modest proposal, and that is to say, the motion. I'm wondering if a five-minute recess would not be appropriate so that House leaders could discuss an effective, meaningful disposition of this motion.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Kormos seeks the consent of the House to recess for five minutes to allow the House leaders the opportunity to discuss the issue. Agreed? Agreed.

This House stands recessed.

The House recessed from 1050 to 1057.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Government House leader.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank you for your ruling and the opportunity to confer with my fellow House leaders, the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke and the member for Welland. We have come to the conclusion that it should move forthwith to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assem-

bly. We believe that the lessons learned will provide some guidance to all governments, and we appreciate the opportunity to have that heard in the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Miller moves that the matter of the delayed release of certain members of this House from the March 25, 2010, budget lock-up be referred to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly for its consideration. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

ORAL QUESTIONS

SENIOR CITIZENS

Mr. Tim Hudak: This is a question to the Premier. If the Premier's failure to mention seniors in the throne speech raised any questions about what Dalton McGuinty thinks of Ontario's seniors, his recent attacks on seniors' budgets make it clear. Premier, you're attacking the pocketbooks of Ontario's seniors on three fronts at once: the HST tax grab, hydro rate increases and now your smart meter tax grab—all at the same time.

Premier, do you think Ontario's seniors are living the high life, or just how out of touch have you become?

Interjection: How much more can they take?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: There's some energy there today, Speaker, which is always a good thing.

I want to thank my honourable colleague for the question and take this opportunity to thank the older generations for everything that they have done. After all, it was through their good efforts that we have the health care system that we have today, that we have the education system that we have today, that we have colleges, universities, roads and bridges and the like. So obviously, we sense a great deal of responsibility to ensure that seniors enjoy a good standard of living and a good quality of life throughout their lives—which makes me ask: Why is it that if seniors are so supportive of our determined efforts to reduce the cost of generic drugs in Ontario, we don't have the support of my honourable colleague opposite? Get on board with seniors and help us get the cost of generic drugs down.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: That's not a pat on the back Ontario seniors are feeling from their Premier; it's a hand in their pocket. You're attacking them through hydro bills, the HST tax grab, and now your so-called smart meters tax grab. In fact, Premier, the only time you mentioned the word "senior" in your budget speech was when you said that you'd reduce OPS senior executive pay, but then again, that promise lasted for less than 24 hours.

On May 1, you hit seniors with \$350 more per year on their hydro bills. You also hit them with a surprise attack through the HST on May 1. I'll ask you, Premier, how much is too much? How much more will seniors pay, thanks to your so-called smart meter tax grab?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleague is nothing if not creative, inventive when it comes to the particular numbers that he's just raised, and I think Ontario seniors recognize that.

I can say that in terms of some of the things we've been able to do for and with our seniors, we have, through our Ontario senior homeowners' property tax grant—that is a grant that was doubled to \$500 this year, as announced in our 2008 budget.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: They voted against it.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: And that's a provision against which my honourable colleague voted.

I can also say that the government is providing \$1 billion over the next five years through that particular grant to more than 600,000 Ontario seniors who have low to middle incomes who own their homes. We think that's a positive step that demonstrates our continuing support for our seniors.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: The only thing inventive here is your attempts to raid the pocketbooks of Ontario seniors any way you can. Your so-called smart meter tax grab is going to charge seniors higher rates to turn on their lights, to use the computer, to spend a day at their home. On July 1, you're going to hit the seniors with an HST tax grab on their hydro costs, their retirement funds, gas for their cars and their home heating costs. This Premier is even going to charge seniors for taking a vacation to visit the grandkids.

I ask you, Premier, how much do you think Ontario seniors are sitting on? When is enough enough? When will you tell your ministers to stop their attack on the pocketbooks of Ontario seniors?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Let me say that in addition to the increase that we provided for benefits for our seniors through the property tax grant, and in addition to our determined effort to reduce the cost of generic drugs and why that's so important to seniors who are covered by our drug benefit plan in the province of Ontario—because the last time we attacked high drug costs, we were able to list 184 new drugs since 2006, including Lucentis, which treats macular degeneration, which is very important for our seniors.

What I want to say as well is that, as we continue to pursue our lowering of generic drug costs, with those savings we will cover still more new drugs for Ontario seniors, who are beneficiaries. We will also find ways to invest still further in our health care system. Over 60% of our lifetime-related health costs are accumulated after the age of 65. Seniors are very concerned about the quality of their health care. We'll keep working—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier McGuinty told Ontario families and seniors that his so-called smart meters will

pay for themselves: "It's all designed to ensure that you are in fact saving money over the long term."

Premier, you have a well-earned reputation for saying one thing and doing the complete opposite. Why did you say that your smart meter tax grab will save money when in fact it does the complete opposite?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'd ask my honourable colleague to develop a better understanding of the smart meter and what we're going to do with it. With a smart meter, an Ontario senior, an Ontario family, will be able to, for the first time, pay differential rates depending on the time of the day when you use your electricity. We want to create the possibility for families to use an appliance at an off-peak period during which electricity will be at a lower rate, and we can't do that right now unless we have smart meters in place.

This is all about ensuring that Ontario families can conserve electricity and can reduce their electricity bill by taking advantage of new technology. Many other parts of the world are already there. We're working as hard as we can to catch up.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: What this is all about is a Premier who continues to betray the trust of Ontario taxpayers, a Premier who continues to break his word to say one thing and do the opposite.

Now Premier McGuinty will charge seniors, when he promised 4.3 cents per kilowatt hour in a previous election, up to 9.9 cents—more than doubling the cost of hydro for a senior to have the privilege, in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario, of turning on a computer, a radio or TV during the daytime.

Premier, you committed when you brought in these smart meters that they would be able to reduce their hydro costs, when in fact Toronto Hydro has said that some 72% of their customers are now paying more for their power thanks to your smart meter tax grab. Did you bungle this smart meter initiative? Did you bungle flexible pricing? Or did you—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Premier.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: One of the greatest concerns that weighed heavily on the minds of Ontario families and businesses as well, when we first earned the privilege of serving Ontarians as a government back in 2003, was whether or not we could keep the lights on. They were concerned about the vigour and vitality of our electricity system. They knew that under the previous government electricity rates had been frozen, which was just not sensible. They knew that there was no free lunch and that we needed to invest in the system, and we've done that dramatically.

Since 2003, we've built 8,000 megawatts of clean, reliable power; that's enough to power 1.9 million homes. Through our clean energy program, we've leveraged over \$16 billion in new investment. We're talking about some 36,000 jobs.

All families know that we needed to invest in our system. They know there's a cost connected with that,

and I believe they feel it's well worth making that kind of investment to ensure that we have electricity that's there for all of us when we need it.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I can't believe the Premier is talking about keeping the lights on. Sir, when you're increasing the hydro bills of Ontario seniors by \$350 per year in this year alone and then hitting them on top of that with your smart meter tax grab, Ontario seniors are going to be challenged to keep the lights on in their own homes because of this train wreck of an energy policy.

Premier, Ontario seniors are going to pay more to put on their computers, to do their baking, to do their laundry, to listen to the radio, and you dismiss them by telling them to do their laundry or the dishwashing at midnight. And they'll be even harder hit when the smart meter tax comes into play.

Have you engaged in a three-front multiple attack on the pocketbooks of Ontario seniors because of incompetence or because you're out of touch, or both?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to remind my honourable colleague and his party what it is that they left to Ontarians in terms of their electricity system. The system was unreliable. We were experiencing electricity shortages—blackouts—and there was no plan to meet Ontario's growth. The energy sector was very hesitant when it came to investing in Ontario. Dirty, coal-fired generation increased 127% from 1995 to 2003. Prices were frozen, but with health and environmental costs included, coal was costing over \$4 billion per year in Ontario. We're talking about premature deaths, hospital admissions and visits to the emergency room.

We said we were not prepared to accept that. We said we had to make investments in our electricity system. We had to clean it up. We had to strengthen it. We had to bring in new technologies, like the smart meter, that will give more control to our families and businesses when it comes to their own particular bill.

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. This past Saturday, much to the surprise of many Ontarians, Dalton McGuinty's HST started to kick in. We know that this government has estimated how much money their unfair new tax will take out of family budgets. Will the Premier finally reveal what he knows and tell Ontario families how much the harmonized sales tax is actually going to cost them?

1110

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: It was something that was in the budget, it was something that was put on a website quite some time ago, and I can, if my honourable colleague asked us to do so, make reference to some of the information.

For a single parent on Ontario Works with two kids ages five and seven, they will benefit by \$585 overall. For a single senior with a pension income of \$20,000, the

net impact will be a positive \$105. For a single individual with a \$30,000 income, the net impact is \$255. For a couple with a \$70,000 income, with two kids ages five and 10, the net impact is a positive \$365. This information has been available for quite some time.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Anybody can go to the government's website and get their spin, but the reality is that since the Premier is not going to fess up to the reality, I'm glad to provide Ontario families with some of the reality and clarity around the cost certainty of this particular tax.

New Democrats actually used Statistics Canada's well-respected social policy simulation database and model to calculate the full impact of the HST on Ontario families. I know that the Premier is actually a numbers guy, given the way he likes to spout off numbers in question period as he just did, so would he like to guess what the HST is going to cost Ontario families?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I can understand why Ontarians might be confused, because we put out some numbers through the Ministry of Finance and my honourable colleague has put out some numbers. I think Ontario families should be able to have confidence in independent, arm's-length, third party assessments of the consequences of our tax reforms.

I refer to two in particular. One is put out by the school of public policy at the University of Calgary by Professor Jack Mintz. He says that over the course of the next 10 years, we are going to experience a capital investment of \$47 billion, we're going to create up to 600,000 net new jobs and increase annual worker incomes by up to 8.8%. That's one. The other one my colleague refused to acknowledge even exists is put out by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. The title says it all; the title of that paper is, Not a Tax Grab After All.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'm sure the Premier knows that the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives has actually indicated quite clearly that they do not support the HST, and I have the letter which indicates that. If he would like to have it, I can certainly send it across the way.

Let me tell you this: The average family will pay more, a lot more—\$792 more each and every year. That's the average; half of Ontario's families, in fact, will be paying more than that. When was the Premier planning on telling families that they'll be paying nearly \$800 more a year in new taxes?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I cannot accept the calculations put forward by the NDP and I would encourage Ontario families to bring the same sense of healthy skepticism when it comes to the NDP calculations.

I would recommend to them once again two independent, arm's-length, third party reports. One says that this is the way to create 600,000 new jobs over the course of the next 10 years. It will result in \$47 billion worth of new capital investment to help us strengthen our econ-

omy. The other is put out by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. It's entitled Not a Tax Grab After All. It says that for low-income families, they're going to come out ahead; for middle-income families, it's a wash; and for our wealthiest families, they're going to end up paying more.

Again, I'll leave it to families. They can look to the NDP for numbers or they can look to independent reports.

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is to the Premier, but I do want to quote from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. I quote from a letter: "Accordingly, it is not correct to state that the CCPA supports the HST, or indeed that the authors of the paper in question do so, and I would request that your campaign issue a statement correcting the error." That's from your member from Toronto Centre's campaign quoting the CCPA improperly.

The question is this: We know the Premier likes to talk up his tax cuts and his credits, so we included them in our model. We actually put his numbers into our model. After paying \$800 more in HST, the average Ontario family will get back \$322 in the cuts and credits that the government likes to brag about. Can the Premier tell us how paying \$800 more and getting \$300 back actually makes families further ahead?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I just have a healthy skepticism when it comes to NDP math. I would recommend to Ontarians that they bring the same approach.

What I can say is that I know that families can be confused by all of the numbers, and I'd recommend to them two independent reports which I think introduce a little bit more light and a little less heat into this important debate.

I also want to reaffirm something that I've said several times over: We know that what we're asking of Ontario families is not an easy thing to do, but we think it's something that is the right thing to do. We think that we need to do it. We've just gone through this terrible recession and we've lost 250,000 jobs. Growing stronger in Ontario is no longer an option; it's a must. This is the single most important thing that we can do to create jobs, not just for us today but for our kids tomorrow, and I believe that parents and families are prepared to make that commitment.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier likes to claim that businesses are going to lower prices because of all the money that they're going to be saving with the harmonization. Even if businesses put every single penny they save into cutting their prices, the average Ontario family will still pay \$638 more in taxes.

Does this Premier agree that Ontario families deserve to have this information before the tax finally kicks in?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I know that what we're asking of families is not easy. This will, in fact, affect the cost of 17% of their consumer purchases, but

we've worked as hard we can to make it manageable for our families.

Some 93% of Ontarians are getting a personal income tax cut, and that happened on January 1 of this year; and 2.9 million families and individuals are going to get our new annual tax credit of \$260 per person. Then there are our transition payments: There's \$1,000 for a family earning less than \$160,000 and \$300 for an individual earning less than \$80,000.

We've done everything that we possibly can to make this manageable and acceptable to families. I will be the first to say, at the end of the day, that we are in fact asking families to do more, but we think they're prepared to make that commitment to strengthen our economy.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Make no mistake, and I'll be fair to the Premier in this regard, there are some who will benefit because of the HST. Banks will increase their profits and accountants will see a lot more business, but the average Ontario family will absolutely lose, and they'll lose big time.

Will this Premier finally admit that his unfair HST will do one thing and one thing only: It will cost Ontario families more each and every single day?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I can't accept that, of course, and I might say, in passing, that I think banks are taking the biggest hit as a result of our going ahead with the HST.

What I do want to return to—I think what is the essence of this—is why we are doing this. We believe that we have to strengthen our economy. We believe that in an era of profound globalization, where our businesses here in Ontario do so much by way of exporting—they're exporting their products into a highly competitive, globalized economy, and they're competing against people in other places where they have this value-added tax—we have to have the HST, together with our other package of tax reforms, to ensure that we grow stronger.

I think parents are motivated by the same ideal—every generation. We're prepared to do whatever it takes to build a stronger economy for our kids to secure a bright future. Fundamentally, that's what this policy is all about.

TAXATION

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: My question today is to the Minister of Revenue. There are just 58 days until Dalton McGuinty starts adding the greedy HST to his hydro rate hikes, to charges for smart meters, to the \$53-million backdoor energy tax, to the \$437-million Samsung subsidy—and the list of energy taxes goes on and on.

Mr. Jim Willis of Barrie doubts that hydro companies will pass along the value of input credits to customers, but he can say with certainty that you'll make seniors pay 8% more on their condo fees.

The member for Barrie didn't ask Mr. Willis's question, so I will: Minister, what makes you think you'll get away with attacking the budgets and the pocketbooks of Ontario seniors?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I agree with the member from Barrie that what her riding needs, what your riding needs and what my riding needs are more jobs, and that's exactly why we're reforming our tax system.

I remind the member and the good people in his constituency that their member voted against reducing the personal income tax rate to the lowest of any province in this country on the first \$37,000. I want to remind the people in his riding, when they get the HST rebate, that their member voted against that new rebate, that he voted against increasing the senior property tax credit by an additional \$250. He voted against that as well, much, I think, to the surprise of his constituents.

I remember when that member believed that what we should do is reform taxes. That's what his former Premier said, that's what his leader said. Today they've changed their positions conveniently, but they—

1120

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm sure Mr. Willis in Barrie is going to be really excited about that answer.

Seniors are on to the McGuinty Liberals. Mr. Willis knows you're handing out severance packages to the HST tax collectors who won't miss one day of work.

Members of CARP wrote to say, "The tax 'rebate' to us is a transparent trick," and the money you're handing out is from the pockets of taxpayers.

Mr. John Hinman of Cobourg puts it more bluntly when he says, "The HST is a monumental tax grab."

The member from Northumberland won't ask, so I will: Minister, what made you think you could pull the wool over Ontario seniors' eyes and fool them about your greedy HST tax grab?

Hon. John Wilkinson: Another thing that the member voted against is the transition payments that are provided by people like Jim Flaherty, Helena Guergis and Patrick Brown, who also thought that the best thing that we could do to build a stronger Canada is to have Ontario reform its tax system so that we're competitive in the 21st century.

I want everyone in Ontario to understand that that party opposite said, "No, you should not receive the transition benefit," and when that \$333 cheque shows up in your family's home in June, or that \$100 cheque shows up if you're an individual, that there was a party in this place that voted against that. They decided that Jim Flaherty and Stephen Harper were wrong. They decided the best thing we should do is not make sure that consumers have that money. It is important for consumers to have that money so that it gives us time to get our permanent tax cuts, the ones that you voted against, right into our economy—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. Stop the clock.

New question?

CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

Mr. Peter Kormos: To the Minister of Community Safety: Why won't this minister ensure that vulnerable, mentally ill inmates are in appropriate hospital settings instead of hellholes like the Don jail?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: My ministry continues to ensure that adequate resources are provided so that within our correctional facilities, there are both the human resources and the physical resources to ensure that those with mental illness are treated and have the necessary services available to them.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Kormos: Speaker, 32-year-old Jeff Munro, suffering from severe mental illness, including schizophrenia, was battered and stomped to death while in the Don jail. Now the government is being sued.

Why won't the government admit it was wrong, apologize, settle and really do something to ensure that this never happens again?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: As the member knows, I'm not going to comment on any specific case, especially a case that's before the courts. The member knows that. But the McGuinty government is committed to the fair and compassionate treatment of people—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Withdraw the comment, please.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stand and withdraw the comment.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Let me repeat, because it's worth repeating and it's important that we repeat it: The McGuinty government is committed to the fair and compassionate treatment of people with signs of or a diagnosis of a mental illness. The people in our correctional services facilities take that very, very seriously, and we provide those services.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Ted McMeekin: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think you're doing a swell job. I just wanted to sneak that in.

My question is for the Minister of Transportation. The people of Hamilton understand better than most how important a comprehensive, efficient transit system in a community is. A good transit system not only takes cars off our streets and reduces gridlock and emissions, but is good news for the environment. It also provides people who don't have a car with an easy and accessible way to get around town.

Minister, can you explain what your government is doing to improve transit in my beloved city of Hamilton?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'd like to thank the gracious member from Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale for his question. We know how vital transit

systems are to communities across the province. The gas tax is a prime example of the support that we are providing to municipalities. This year, we're investing \$316 million in 93 municipal transit systems in 119 municipalities—that's almost \$11 million for Hamilton.

Furthermore, Metrolinx has completed a benefits case analysis study earlier this year to look at different rapid transit options for Hamilton. The benefits case analysis shows that there are a number of options, all of which would work for Hamilton. This is a really good opportunity for the people of Hamilton to talk about which option will work best for Hamilton, and that community discussion is ongoing.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: Thank you, Minister. My constituents certainly value the service improvements made in Hamilton and the government's investments there. Expanded services for newer buses have certainly encouraged people to get out of their cars and to choose public transit.

Minister, with our proximity to Toronto, many people in my riding regularly make the commute to downtown Toronto for work, for appointments and to meet friends. Speaker, through you to the minister, what is the government doing to improve GO service and make it faster and more efficient for Hamiltonians to visit Toronto?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The question is a really good one, because what we are trying to do is to get people across the greater Toronto and Hamilton area to make a greener choice, to take public transit across the region, and to create a regional transit network. That's exactly why we created Metrolinx. It's about building that comprehensive regional network.

GO has made a number of changes that will improve service for Hamilton. Last year GO added a fourth daily train trip out of the Hamilton GO centre in the morning. In 2008, GO introduced more 12-car trains on the Lakeshore West line, which adds 20% more capacity than the 10-car trains. As was announced today, we're investing in the revitalization of Union Station. That's a revitalization that will benefit all GO riders because those GO riders from Hamilton come into Union Station. It will be—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

PHARMACISTS

Mr. John O'Toole: The question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Minister, last week the committee on finance and economic affairs reviewed your government's pharmacy cutbacks contained in Bill 16. Committee members heard from pharmacists who described the impact of your legislation on their customers. The presenters included pharmacist Peter Meraw, a former Durham riding resident who is co-owner of the Minden Pharmasave with his partner, Richard Smith. He said your government will take away services and impact on seniors. This means fewer services for patients, loss of jobs and the possible closure of many small community pharmacies.

Minister, what will it take to convince your government to delay these cutbacks until there are fair consultations with consumers?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I am delighted to talk about our proposed drug reforms. This is all about getting fair and substantially lower drug prices for all Ontarians. We are paying far too much for drugs now. We can save people hundreds of dollars per year through these changes, and we're going to do that.

This is also about being able to cover more drugs for more people, and it's about cleaning up a system of these so-called professional allowances that even pharmacists now are admitting it's time to get rid of.

1130

We are concerned about maintaining access in rural communities. We are concerned about making sure that people have access to pharmacies and pharmacy services. Our plans include special support for—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. John O'Toole: Minister, whether it is a topic of sex education, the harmonized sales tax or industrial wind farms, your government has refused to listen. In fact, the people of Ontario are sick and tired of Premier Dad's attitude.

At the Bill 16 hearings last week, your government clearly cut about a billion dollars from Ontario pharmacists. These cutbacks have profound implications for front-line health care in Ontario.

Minister, why won't your government learn from past mistakes and have genuine consultations with pharmacy professionals, patients and stakeholders before making these reckless decisions—a detrimental impact on health care in Ontario?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We are very, very anxious to talk to pharmacists. In fact, we've had not one but two meetings cancelled by the pharmacists' association, and we are anxious to have a new one.

The member opposite has been talking about seniors. Let me quote from Susan Eng, in advocacy at the Canadian Association of Retired Persons: "Lowering the cost of all prescription drugs is a major priority for our members, regardless of whether they are covered by the Ontario government, private drug plans or paid out of their own pockets. They and all Ontarians will benefit from the direct savings in drug costs and redirection of the public savings from these measures towards more patient services and support of pharmacies in rural and under-served regions. We welcome the improvement to affordability and the potential for more access to new drugs and encourage"—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Premier. This was to have been Community Living Day at Queen's Park. For more than a decade, Community

Living Ontario has brought together MPPs and families to celebrate in Ontario where everyone has a right to participate in their community. Regrettably, they have cancelled this year's celebration. They had to because your government, the McGuinty government, has broken its promise and reneged on its 2007 four-year funding commitment. The developmental services sector's agencies and staff already struggle to provide services for their clients.'

Why did the McGuinty government fail to keep its commitment to Community Living Ontario and cancel its promise of a full four-year funding arrangement?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I'm very sorry that Community Living cancelled their day at Queen's Park because it would have been a great opportunity to come and tell all of you the good work that they are doing. So I'm very disappointed about that.

However, I can say that we have done a lot for the developmental sector in Ontario. We have passed new developmental services legislation that will make the system fairer, simpler and sustainable. We have invested nearly half a billion dollars to strengthen and expand services. Almost half of this investment, \$245 million, has been committed to agency-based increases and wage enhancements for front line-workers in this sector. I want to—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: Listening to the minister, I want to put this into the frankest terms I can. This government has earmarked about \$20 million for so-called undefined transformation costs. At the same time it has cancelled its 2010 funding commitment to Community Living. Community Living needs the \$22 million it was promised. This unfunded \$20 million would fulfill most of that urgent need.

Will this government reverse its disastrous decision to break its 2007 funding promise or, at the very least, reallocate the so-called transformation funds to address the urgent needs facing thousands of Ontarians and their families, those with special needs?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Again, this government has invested a lot in developmental disabilities in Ontario since we came into power. For example, in 2008-09, there were 27,385 families who received special services at home. This is a 35% increase in people served. Again in 2008-09, there were more than 27,000 families who received other much-needed services for their families.

In this difficult economic time, we are increasing funding by \$36 million to provide critical support and services for people in—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

ASTHMA TREATMENT

Mr. Dave Levac: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Asthma affects approx-

imately 13% of our children who are under 12 years old and 8.4% of all Ontarians over the age of 12. It's a leading cause of hospitalization among children and one of the largest causes of school and work absenteeism. When I first started teaching, the average number of puffers in a school was three to four per school. When I left, it was about three or four per class.

There are constituents in my riding whose children are directly affected by asthma. They are concerned about the adverse health effects that are associated with asthma. Many years ago, I lost my father to asthma.

I ask the minister: In light of World Asthma Day and for all of us who have gone through the pain of asthma, could you please tell us what our government is doing to better serve Ontarians who live with asthma?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the outstanding member for Brant. When it comes to asthma, one of the most important things we can do is phase out the use of coal-fired power generation.

Today, it's the lowest it has been in 45 years—down 70% since 2003. This is good news for our health. The air pollution caused by coal-fired generation has been linked to 670 premature deaths a year, 1,100 emergency room visits a year and over 300,000 other illnesses, including headaches, coughing and other respiratory symptoms. By closing these plants, we're bringing down the number of respiratory-related illnesses in the province, including asthma.

We're also bringing down the cost of generic drugs for all Ontarians, including people with asthma—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Dave Levac: I thank the government for its work in improving the causes for people with asthma. I'm very proud of the work that the government has done, especially for the kids. However, my constituents would be interested to know where the results are in regard to the asthma action plan. The plan itself in investment is good, but results are better.

Interjections.

Mr. Dave Levac: Unlike the heckling that's going on from those who don't understand about asthma, I would ask you to give us specific examples of how the implementation of the plan and the investments are working so that our communities can better deal with asthma.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm very encouraged by some of the results that we are seeing in our asthma plan of action. Last year, we invested \$4 million, and we're starting to see the results. Let me share those with you.

We have a primary care asthma pilot project involving 1,400 children and adults with asthma in eight sites across the province. Here's what they found: a 50% reduction in emergency room visits for asthma and significant improvements in asthma control, including a 46% reduction in nighttime symptoms of asthma. The patients are very satisfied with the care they're getting, as are the staff.

These reductions are a significant result. It really is encouraging that we know we can do more when it comes to looking after people with asthma.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Linda and David Russell have been working with Brampton Caledon Community Living to find a residential home for their daughter Joanne, who is developmentally disabled. This family has provided daily support for Joanne for 29 years. As parents, they've accepted this great responsibility but are now finding themselves mentally and physically exhausted.

Six hundred people are currently on a wait-list for residential services through Brampton Caledon Community Living. Joanne is just one. Minister, when can families like the Russells expect action from your government to decrease these waiting lists?

1140

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: First of all, let me say how sensitive I am to all these families who have an individual, a son or a daughter, with developmental disabilities. I know much about what they are going through because I have some in my own family. I will say that this government has been investing, since 2003, a lot of money in developmental disabilities. We have a new piece of legislation, and, again, we know that we need to do more. We have invested a lot of money to reduce these waiting lists, we have invested money to develop the new Passport program, and we will continue to work to help these individuals.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Minister, legislation is words. Linda Russell and her daughter Joanne need action. You know that there are over 12,000 people on wait-lists waiting right now for residential care; 80% of these parents are over 70 years of age.

As you know, Community Living Day was supposed to be held today to celebrate, but they're not celebrating because they feel betrayed by your government. Minister, what should I be telling families like the Russells, who have been sitting on waiting lists for years?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I think that what you should say to these parents is tell them to work very closely with our ministry out in your area; that we have closed institutions and have opened new opportunities out there in the community; and that we are continuing to work with our partners like Community Living to make sure that individuals like the family that you just talked to us about have the services that they need.

If there is no place—I know that we need to invest more. Every year we invest more, and this year we have a budget to help those who have an urgent need of coming into service. We will continue to work with these families, and let's hope that your constituents—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. On April 14, the Toronto city manager asked the McGuinty government to clarify when, if ever, the \$4-

billion cut from Transit City funding would finally flow. The McGuinty government has refused to answer the question. If, as the Premier insists and as they're all chirping over there, his government is simply delaying rather than cutting Transit City funding, why won't he say exactly when the \$4 billion will actually flow?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the question. I know that my honourable colleague would not want to contribute to the mythology that plays well in some parts, and that she understands that what we're talking about is taking the investments that we're going to put in place over the course of eight years and now extending that over a period of 10 years. The investments remain the same nonetheless.

We're looking forward to the advice from Metrolinx with respect to some of the specifics in terms of when we would start and how it would work. Our commitment to public transit in Toronto and other parts of Ontario remains as strong and as firm as it has ever been.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Until this Premier provides a timeline for flowing the \$4 billion, it's actually a cut, a cut that will mean decades more of long commutes, gridlocked streets and worsening air pollution.

We're told that a new Metrolinx plan will delay the start of the Eglinton line by at least two years and the Finch West line by at least three years until after the next provincial election, curiously.

So I have to ask this question: Is this the new McGuinty re-election strategy? Break your promises today and then run on them in the next election?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: She cuts me to the quick. I don't know what to say.

Just so that my honourable colleague gets a better understanding of our specific commitment on this score, there was a letter sent to Mr. Joseph Pennachetti, the city manager at city hall, and it comes from the Deputy Minister of Transportation. It says, among other things, "Initial work by Metrolinx suggests that the four Transit City projects can reasonably be completed in 10 years, while achieving the required savings of \$4 billion in the first five years. The province looks forward to receiving the recommendation of Metrolinx in this regard."

Let me say one thing further, something that has been asserted several times over by my Minister of Transportation. The city of Toronto folks have a tremendous amount of expertise when it comes to public transit. We need to find a way to come together and to work together to deliver on these projects as soon as we possibly can. Working together, there is nothing that will stop us from moving ahead with these projects in the interest of the people of Toronto.

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. The food and beverage processing industry is a major economic driver in our province, employing over 110,000

people and purchasing 70% of Ontario's farm production.

As you know, continual investments are necessary to help our agri-food sector remain strong in today's economy and to help it to grow and expand. For example, the demand for gluten-free products is increasing every year. In order to take advantage of this new product, Wallaceburg's International Food Products, Inc. in my riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex needed to modernize their operations so that they could increase productivity and develop new product lines. Because of the provincial support that company received through the rural economic development program, they are enhancing their position.

Could the minister please provide the House with an update on the role that the province is playing—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Carol Mitchell: Thank you for the question. The food and beverage processing industry is now the second-largest manufacturing sector, and the greater Toronto area is the second-largest food processing cluster in North America. Agri-food exports for 2009 totalled \$8.9 billion. For each dollar spent on the ministry's export program, more than \$20 is generated in new export sales. Our Open Ontario plan is about opening the province to new opportunities, new jobs and new growth.

I recently met with Minister Dutil, Quebec's Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, and together we are committed to working in support of the food export companies. We will be jointly championing the SIAL Canada trade show, a prominent international food export trade show—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: Our economy has faced some significant challenges because of the global recession, and Lambton-Kent-Middlesex is certainly no exception. My constituents are determined to move forward. They are looking for new opportunities as they reinvent themselves in this new economy.

Just last month, I was pleased to announce a rural economic development grant for Hollandia Bakeries. This provincial investment will go a long way in improving productivity and efficiency, increasing the company's ability to effectively compete in new markets while maintaining many needed jobs in the Mount Brydges area. Also, by the way, we are going to have our speculaas cookies.

Could the minister please provide more information on what actions our government has taken and will be taking in the future to work with our partners in the processing industry?

Hon. Carol Mitchell: I wanted to emphasize that next year in Toronto, in May, we will be holding the SIAL Canada trade show. This is a first for Ontario. This is so important for our food processors, and they are looking forward to demonstrating to the world the products that are available in Ontario and Quebec.

There are more than 3,000 food processing businesses in the province, of which 700 are located in rural communities. In 2009-10, the ministry committed approximately \$22 million to 33 food and beverage processing companies through the rural economic development program and the rural economic development initiative. Through the RED program, our government is helping companies to create and retain jobs, improve industry competitiveness and enter new markets, open new markets for local farmers—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

CONSERVATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the minister responsible for the Ontario Realty Corp. Minister, as you know, the Eramosa karst is a rare geological feature formed by water dissolving the limestone over 13,000 years on the Niagara escarpment. Its caves, valleys and sinking streams cannot be found anywhere else in our entire province, which is why previous governments have all worked to preserve the Eramosa Karst Conservation Area.

Minister, it is now time to take the next step. The 92 acres of feeder lands which support the karst and the wildlife that live within it are now under threat. You've given direction to the Ontario Realty Corp. to sell off that land for development to support Dalton McGuinty's runaway spending. I ask you, Minister, will you do the right thing, put a stop to the sale and make it part of the conservation area?

1150

Hon. Brad Duguid: Indeed, I've welcomed and listened carefully to some of my colleagues on this particular matter—the member for Hamilton Mountain and the member for Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Westdale—who have spoken to me about this very matter.

Nothing could be farther from the truth. This particular part of the province is going through some environmental assessments. No decisions will be made with regard to the dispensation of this land until those environmental assessments are completed.

What I can say is, through the leadership of these members, the leadership of our Premier and our government, we've donated almost 200 acres of land to the Eramosa Karst Conservation Area, something your government did not do, and something we thought was a very, very important initiative. We are very, very proud to have gotten it done.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: It is encouraging to hear the minister say that no decisions have been made. Minister, I'm asking you to make the right decision today and preserve the feeder lands in the Eramosa karst for generations to come. I think the minister knows that Hamilton city council, the Hamilton Conservation Authority and local conservation clubs were joined by the friends of the Eramosa karst here today, all standing—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. Stop the clock, please. Start the clock.

Sorry, Leader, please continue.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'm pleased to say that my colleague and neighbour the MPP for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Paul Miller, and I are co-sponsoring a private member's bill to preserve this for generations to come.

So, Minister, I ask you to do the right thing. Paul Miller and I are working together; three will make it happen. Will you do the right thing and preserve this for generations to come?

Hon. Brad Duguid: What a scary coming together of those two parties on the issue of the environment.

I appreciate the member's comments, and I appreciate his new-found interest in the environment. But I have to ask, if you're concerned about the environment, why did you oppose the greenbelt?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): That's not helpful at all, member from Peterborough.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound.

Please continue.

Hon. Brad Duguid: We appreciate the member's new-found interest in the environment, but I have to ask him: If you're so concerned about the environment, why did you oppose the greenbelt? I have to ask you, why are you opposing the Clean Water Act? I have to ask you, why did you oppose the ban on pesticides? I have to ask you, why did you oppose our toxic reduction laws? I have to ask you, why did you oppose our internationally recognized growth plan? Why would you support dirty coal over things like clean wind energy and green energy—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. Order on both sides. If the member from Simcoe North and the Minister of Agriculture want to have a discussion, take it outside.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I have a rumble in my tumbly, but I can wait.

New question?

CONSERVATION

Mr. Paul Miller: To the minister responsible for the Ontario Realty Corp.: The Eramosa karst feeder lands must be preserved. The Hamilton Conservation Authority has always understood the necessity of taking these lands into their portfolio to ensure the protection of the Eramosa karst. The Hamilton Conservation Authority, the Friends of the Eramosa Karst, the city of Hamilton and several others are calling for a bumped-up environmental assessment. Will the Minister of the Environment and the minister responsible for the Ontario Realty Corp.

act today to bump up the feeder lands environmental assessment and help the people of Hamilton?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm going to refer this to the Minister of the Environment.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Let me first of all say that this is an important piece of land in the province of Ontario; there's no question about it. That's why we donated over 200 acres of it to the conservation authority.

Let me also say that, as I indicated in a letter that I sent to the Leader of the Opposition some time ago, the project is being planned under the MEI class environmental assessment process. That period ended, I believe, at the end of March. The ministry is currently looking at that to see whether or not it should be bumped up, and a recommendation will be coming in the near future.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: The public interest must triumph over private gain or misguided short-term increase in government coffers. This afternoon, my colleague the member from Niagara West—Glanbrook and I are introducing a bill to protect the Eramosa karst feeder lands. These unique and important ecological lands must be fully and permanently protected. To ensure that these fragile essential feeder lands containing the natural stream in the area are never destroyed, the government must turn them over to the Hamilton Conservation Authority today. Is this government finally going to protect the Eramosa karst by ensuring that the feeder lands are never developed, but are turned over to the Hamilton Conservation Authority for generations to come?

Hon. John Gerretsen: As the member well knows, there is a process in place. It's called an environmental assessment review. That's exactly what we're doing in this case. A class environmental assessment has been done. The matter is before the ministry. We will take a look at it and a decision will be made in due course.

I admire the member opposite, but I must admit that I'm somewhat surprised that he would go and co-sign a bill with a member who has been fighting the greenbelt right from day one in each and every respect. I know that this is not, technically speaking, part of the greenbelt, but it's fairly close to that. So I would just say to the member, be careful with the partners that you choose in co-sponsoring bills.

TAXATION

Mr. Jim Brownell: My question is to the Minister of Revenue. As a province we can no longer rely on a low dollar, and our current tax system is a huge disadvantage, as it taxes investment, affecting every business in Ontario. Groups like the Ontario Chamber of Commerce have said that moving to the HST eliminates this hidden but real tax, saving money and making business more competitive. The HST has the support of groups ranging from leaders in business such as Telus and Bell Canada, and is also supported by poverty advocates such as the Daily Bread Food Bank, because it will benefit low-income earners and create jobs. This is a serious issue

that we're dealing with—and certainly dealing with economic development in Ontario. How important is it that Ontario implements the HST now?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to thank the member for the question. I want to thank him particularly for the hospitality extended to me when I visited his riding.

He'll recall that, in all of my remarks, I asked the good people in his riding, "Do you think the economy is going to go back to the way it was, or do you think it's going to be different?" Overwhelmingly, people said that the economy is going to be different. Then I asked people, "Do you think the response of your government should be to do nothing, or do you think we should recognize that change and ensure that there are jobs for our children and our grandchildren?" People said the status quo is the wrong answer to the great question facing this Legislature.

The right thing to do is to reform our tax system: drag it out of the 20th century and get it into the 21st century so we can compete for 21st-century jobs. We need those jobs today, particularly for our children and our grandchildren. That's why it's so important that our government has decided that we're going to do something that all leading economists tell us—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Brownell: I would like to thank you, too, for coming to the riding. Certainly, you had some very productive meetings with business, and I can say that the visit to the seniors informing them of the HST was very productive.

In the province of Ontario, we export 80% of everything that is produced here. Making Ontario more competitive, the HST will allow businesses to compete and sustain jobs. A report by the Toronto-Dominion Bank estimates that the HST will reduce the cost of doing business in Ontario by \$5.3 billion, and the HST will save businesses more than \$500 million per year in paperwork costs. Former Conservative Ontario Finance Minister Janet Ecker stated, "Moving to a harmonized sales tax is very good for the economy and it's certainly going to help with our business competitiveness." Minister, what will this increased business competitiveness mean for job creation in Ontario?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I say to the member, the question here is that we're in a competition every day for jobs. For example, the United States, which is beside your border on the other side of the river, is our great ally, our great friend, our great market and our great competitor for jobs. On July 1, the rate of taxation on new investment in this province will be half of what it is across the river in the state of New York. I said to the people in your riding, and I've said to other people, "Where should we have the jobs—in the state of New York, in the state of Michigan or right here in Ontario?" We decided to take action to make sure that that new job growth in North America is sited right here in the province that we love. That's what we owe our children. That's why we refuse the advice of those who purport to

believe that the status quo is the right thing to do and move forward to reform our tax system.

MEMBERS' PRIVILEGES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just like to take this opportunity to thank all members, in particular the House leaders, for dealing with the privilege matter so effectively and in the best interests of the House.

There being no further business, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1201 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Joining us in the east public gallery, we have Brian Murphy, Daryl Murphy, Doug Chafe, Lloyd Chafe, Gajen Paramaligham, Andrew Nesbeth, Karin Epp and Larry Palmer, all representatives from Community Living York South.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I take this opportunity to welcome a constituent of mine who's in Toronto today for a job interview, and I wish him well. Adam Payler is sitting in the east gallery. Welcome to Queen's Park.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

DOUGLAS CRAIG BLAKE

Mr. Toby Barrett: It's with great sadness that I report Canada's latest death in Afghanistan is Petty Officer Douglas Craig Blake of Simcoe.

Yesterday afternoon, 37-year-old Petty Officer Blake was killed by an improvised explosive device 25 kilometres southwest of Kandahar. The husband and father of two was returning to camp after disposing of another IED, described in Christie Blatchford's book as "this faceless enemy, this unseen force, that attacks you and kills you and your peers and there's nothing that you can do about it."

Petty Officer Blake was a Canadian navy diver and a member of the Joint Task Force Afghanistan explosive ordinance disposal team. As described by Brigadier General Menard, commander of the Canadian troops in Afghanistan, "incredibly fit, with a backbone of steel, Craig put 100% into everything he did."

"A navy clearance diver, Craig was most comfortable working under water, yet he effortlessly adapted to the rigours of land operations."

This latest death brings to 143 the total number of Canadian soldiers who have died as part of the Afghan mission. Today is a day of mourning across Canada, especially in Haldimand-Norfolk where Petty Officer Blake will be remembered as a local hockey coach and triathlete.

On behalf of the province of Ontario, we all extend our sympathy to his family.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd ask our members and guests to join me as we observe a moment of silence in memory of Petty Officer Blake.

The House observed a moment's silence.

DUTCH LIBERATION ANNIVERSARY

Mr. Reza Moridi: On April 19, it was my honour to become a member of the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 375 of Richmond Hill. The Royal Canadian Legion Branch 375 is a very active Legion, and a number of members of this branch fought for the liberation of Holland.

I have had the privilege of participating in various Legion events and hearing first-hand accounts from the veterans about their active duty during the Second World War. They are truly heroes, and I thank them for their sacrifice and for the freedom that we all enjoy in this wonderful country of ours, Canada.

It is my honour to rise today in this House to commemorate the 65th anniversary of the liberation of Holland. Holland was liberated largely by Canadian troops, with the assistance of other Allied forces.

On May 4, millions of Dutch people commemorate the Remembrance of the Dead for those who fought and died in World War II. Two minutes of silence were observed today throughout Holland at 8 p.m. More than 7,600 Canadians died in the nine months that it took to liberate Holland and they are buried in the Canadian war cemeteries at Groesbeek, Holten and Bergen op Zoom.

We must never forget the sacrifices that our veterans have made in the name of freedom.

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH

Mr. Peter Shurman: I rise today to recognize Children's Mental Health Week in my riding of Thornhill. I do so to recognize the commitment and hard work of all those who deliver mental health services to the children of York region, despite the serious disregard shown to them by the McGuinty government.

These dedicated people do so despite the fact that York region only receives \$127 per child in mental health support while the rest of the GTA receives \$221 per child. The end result is that their current funding only allows them to accommodate 16% of the children identified in need—16%. That means that 84 of every 100 children in York region needing mental health services are going without.

It all comes down to this government setting priorities, which it does not. In January, my colleagues and I on the finance committee travelled around Ontario to ask people what this government's spending priorities should be. We heard from the people who deliver mental health services for children and the parents of the children who need those services. They were unequivocal that children's mental health services should take priority over full-day kindergarten. As we all know, this government did not listen.

NORTHUMBERLAND—QUINTE WEST DAY

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I'm honoured to have this opportunity to remind all my colleagues that on Wednesday—that's tomorrow—I will again be welcoming to Queen's Park a vast array of businesses from my riding. We'll be proudly hosting the second annual Northumberland—Quinte West Day.

This will be a great opportunity for you to see firsthand a sample of the remarkable treasures we have to offer in my riding. To the mayors and councillors who will be joining us from these municipalities, we welcome you to Queen's Park.

To all my colleagues and staff here at Queen's Park, I encourage you to join us in committee rooms 228 and 230 tomorrow from 10 till 1. Prepare to have your day enriched. This is our opportunity to showcase the wonderful things we have to offer in Northumberland—Quinte West. You will find old-fashioned handmade candy; whole-hog sausages; cereal made from 100% Ontario wheat; one of the first recipients of the Premier's award of excellence for agri-food innovation; the National Air Force Museum of Canada and many more.

Take a few minutes to view the displays put on by our local tourism and economic development folks from Northumberland—Quinte West. I'm sure you'll find yourselves excited about the next trip you'll be making to explore the great riding just a few miles east of the GTA to enjoy our rich culture and deepen your appreciation for small-town businesses in Ontario.

I encourage everyone to come and learn more about Northumberland—Quinte West, the gateway to eastern Ontario, to experience and enjoy some of what we proudly call home.

1510

COMMUNITY LIVING DAY

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I wish I was rising today to introduce the staff and clients from my local Community Living organization, but they're not here. As they said in a recent letter written to the minister, "Our day at the Legislature is intended as an opportunity to celebrate with members of Parliament the achievements that we have made together. Given the deep sense of betrayal by your government that our members are feeling as a result of the recently announced budget decisions, we feel that it is impossible to proceed in the spirit of celebration which the day is intended for."

They went on to say, "For this year, we have asked our members to set aside May 4, the day that we were to hold our annual celebration, as a day of mourning in which we reflect on the desperate needs of those individuals and families who have been betrayed by your government's actions."

Today in Ontario there are more than 12,000 people waiting for residential supports and 7,000 waiting for other supports. There are 1,500 parents providing primary care to their children who have an intellectual

disability on a wait-list for residential services, and 80% of these parents are over the age of 70. Yet the McGuinty government chose to break their promise to our Community Living organizations. Despite the huge demand for their services, Community Living may be forced to cut staff to make up for the McGuinty government's failure to meet their commitments. Is it any wonder that they felt that there was nothing to celebrate here in the Legislature today?

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Gilles Bisson: We had, in this House last Thursday, a debate in regard to Bill 36, a bill that would have allowed us in Ontario to add value to those natural resources that are extracted here in the province of Ontario. The government unfortunately voted to turn down this resolution, which was put forward on behalf of the New Democratic caucus by myself. I just want to say that it's a regrettable act, because I think we are all starting to recognize that as we move to the world of multinationals, which are more and more becoming a very big part in the natural resources sector here in Ontario, both in forestry and mining, we are going to see more and more of those natural resources exit the province of Ontario without having value added to them here within the province of Ontario.

I just want to say to the government across the way: You think you might have won the battle, but I don't think, at the end of the day, you're going to win the war. I think that people, no matter if they live in southwestern Ontario, as they look at agricultural products, that are not being added value to here in Ontario and are being processed outside of this province; if you live in north-east or northwestern Ontario and you look at mineral or forestry products that are extracted from our forests or from the ground that are not being added value—I think people are slowly starting to understand that times have changed, and with that comes a need to change the policy. I say to the government: This is an issue that's not going to go away. We are going to see, in the not-too-distant future, a move on this end in order to make sure that we do add value to those natural resources we're so happy to have in the province of Ontario.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Mr. David Oraziatti: We recently had the opportunity to participate in an event in our community. It was a groundbreaking event in partnership with the education community and students and parents. It marked the beginning of a new elementary school, a state-of-the-art infrastructure project that will help our young people reach their full potential. It has been decades since the provincial government has provided funding to improve the infrastructure of our schools. This construction project, which will create new jobs and further strengthen our local economy, is something the entire community is very proud of. We're investing \$15.5 million to build the

new Francis H. Clergue Elementary School. It's part of our government's \$4.8-billion initiative called Good Places to Learn that is addressing school infrastructure issues.

Since 2003, we've increased funding for students at the Algoma District School Board and the Huron-Superior Catholic District School Board by more than 50% per pupil. In our local schools as well, elementary schools that now have fewer than 23 students are over 90%.

In fact, Mario Turco, the director of education at the Algoma District School Board, said, "This is an exciting development for the future of French immersion in our city as it is the first time the entire French immersion program will be housed under one roof in our community."

Wanda McQueen, the chair of the board, said, "This new school will combine the greatest ideas from around the province, including the latest technological and architectural advancements that will continue to improve student learning and raise the level of French immersion in our community."

LINDA JOHNSON

Mr. Jim Brownell: I rise in the House today to congratulate and pay tribute to nurse Linda Johnson, who was recognized recently for her care and dedication to the nursing profession. Nurse Johnson was awarded the Human Touch Award through Cancer Care Ontario.

Linda Johnson has been working at the Winchester District Memorial Hospital in my riding of Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry since 1983. She has also worked in the satellite chemotherapy unit since it opened in 1993. Her accomplishments include serving as a role model, leading the move to a brand new unit during hospital redevelopment, working as a cancer care facilitator, serving as nurse navigator and spearheading the Winchester District Memorial Hospital breast assessment team.

As well, Nurse Johnson continues to lead many educational opportunities for staff, speaks at community events and fundraises with the Winchester Hospital Healers, one of the top fundraising teams for the Weekend To End Women's Cancers in Ottawa.

I would like to congratulate nurse Linda Johnson on receiving the Human Touch Award. She has certainly shown her good work at the Winchester District Memorial Hospital and for Cancer Care Ontario, and she certainly has shown herself to be a true health care champion for my riding of Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry. Congratulations, Linda Johnson.

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Mr. Pat Hoy: It is my pleasure to offer a very warm welcome today to representatives of the Alliance of Ontario Food Processors. The alliance represents the interests of the Ontario food and beverage processing industry, manufacturers of products we enjoy every day.

The food and beverage processing industry is a major contributor to jobs and the economy of Ontario. In total, the industry generates \$33 billion in shipments annually, directly employs over 110,000 people and is the major customer of Ontario's farmers, transforming over 70% of what is produced at the farm level into safe, quality foods for consumers.

This is the second year in which the alliance has held a Queen's Park Day. Representatives of food and beverage manufacturers will be meeting today with MPPs and government officials to talk about some of the major issues affecting their industry. They will be discussing the various opportunities that the industry can provide to support the government's key priorities of skilled jobs, health, environment and building the economy.

I encourage all members to attend the alliance's reception in the legislative dining room from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. Alliance members have travelled from all across the province to let us know that they are important assets to our communities. Please join them in the legislative dining room from 5 to 7.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Seated in the east members' gallery, I'd like to introduce Jowi Taylor, who conceived the idea to create a guitar made from 63 items of real Canadian history that represent different cultures and communities. Ontario contributed more pieces than any other province in the creation of this guitar. Most notably, Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau's canoe paddle and Don Cherry's pants worn in 1979 make up part of this instrument. MPPs and staff are invited to pose for a photo with the guitar today in committee room 2. Jowi, welcome to Queen's Park.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the report on intended appointments dated May 4, 2010, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 108(f)9, the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Mr. Tim Hudak: I move that leave be given for the introduction of a bill entitled the Eramosa karst feeder lands protection act and that it now be read for the first time.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Just as we're correcting this, we'll come back.

1520

PHYSICAL FITNESS DAY ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LA JOURNÉE DE L'APTITUDE PHYSIQUE

Mr. O'Toole moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 49, An Act proclaiming Physical Fitness Day /
Projet de loi 49, Loi proclamant la Journée de l'aptitude physique.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement?

Mr. John O'Toole: Just exactly how long is my time, Mr. Speaker?

First of all, medical studies have consistently shown that a moderate amount of physical activity is one of the keys to a long, healthy and productive life. My bill will proclaim the first Friday in September of each year as Physical Fitness Day in line with the first week, normally, when schools return to full-day learning.

I can only say this, that the government of Ontario recognizes and respects the contribution made by coaches, volunteers, educators, parents and medical professionals in the promotion of physical fitness. These community leaders serve as role models in encouraging everyone to include a moderate amount of physical activity every day in their lives. The government joins in that encouragement so that everyone may benefit, not only as individuals, but also as members of a healthy society.

I'm sure the province of Ontario will support this bill when I have the opportunity to bring it to the House. I seek unanimous consent to do that now, if necessary.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member seeks unanimous consent—

Hon. Monique M. Smith: No.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I heard a no.

PETITIONS

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a petition to do with health care and it reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Tim Hudak and the Ontario PC caucus support public health care and protecting access to front-line care;

"Whereas Ontario families have already given Dalton McGuinty \$15 billion in health taxes, which was wasted on the \$1-billion eHealth scandal. Now the McGuinty Liberals are cutting front-line public health care and putting independent pharmacies at risk;

"Dalton McGuinty's cuts will:

“—reduce pharmacy hours during evenings and week-ends,

“—increase wait times and lineups for patients,

“—increase the out-of-pocket fees people pay for their medication and its delivery,

“—reduce critical patient health care services for seniors and people with chronic illnesses such as diabetes, heart disease and breathing problems;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the McGuinty government stop its cuts to pharmacies.”

I support this petition and will sign it.

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

Mr. Pat Hoy: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontarians pay more for popular generic drugs for diabetes, high blood pressure and other common health issues than patients in other jurisdictions; and

“Whereas Ontarians deserve fair prescription drug prices so that families and seniors are not charged more than those in other countries; and ...

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That all members of the Ontario Legislature support Ontarians by passing the government’s legislation to lower the cost of prescription medications.”

I have signed the petition.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Ted Arnott: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas multiple industrial wind farm projects are being considered by the government of Ontario in the absence of independent, scientific studies on the long-term effects on the health of residents living near industrial wind farms;

“Therefore, we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the government of Ontario to put a moratorium on any renewable energy approvals for the construction of industrial wind farms in the province of Ontario until such time as it can be demonstrated that all reasonable concerns regarding the long-term effects on the health of residents living near industrial wind farms have been fully studied and addressed.”

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas professional allowance revenues for generic drugs are not being used to directly benefit patient care and there being evidence of abuse in the system;

“Whereas Ontarians pay far too much for generic drugs because of these professional allowances;

“Whereas the opposition parties who are against these reforms are in the pockets of the big drug companies;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To continue to pursue legislation that will put an end to this flawed system of professional—”

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just would ask the honourable member, has that petition been approved by the table?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Yes, it has, Speaker. It’s stamped.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I have a problem with that, because I saw that petition last week and I don’t think that’s parliamentary language; accusing somebody of being in somebody else’s pocket is not parliamentary.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I withdraw, Speaker. But it is stamped.

On a point of order, Speaker?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would just ask that the derogatory comments that are made, the unparliamentary comments—you have withdrawn them. I’ll allow you to finish reading your petition.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I withdraw that part, Speaker. Thank you. Just to continue,

“To continue to pursue legislation that will put an end to this flawed system of professional allowances for generic drugs in order to reinvest the savings to the benefit of Ontarians.”

I support this, and I will sign it and send it to the table with Jacob.

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it reads as follows:

“Whereas Tim Hudak and the Ontario PC caucus support public health care and protecting access to front-line care;

“Whereas Ontario families have already given Dalton McGuinty \$15 billion in health taxes, which was wasted on the \$1-billion eHealth scandal. Now the McGuinty Liberals are cutting front-line public health care and putting independent pharmacies at risk;

“Dalton McGuinty’s cuts will:

“—reduce pharmacy hours during evenings and week-ends,

“—increase wait times and lineups for patients,

“—increase the out-of-pocket fees people pay for their medication and its delivery,

“—reduce critical patient health care services for seniors and people with chronic illnesses such as diabetes, heart disease and breathing problems;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the McGuinty government stop its cuts to pharmacies.”

Thank you very much for allowing me to present this petition.

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontarians pay more for popular generic drugs for diabetes, high blood pressure and other common health issues than patients in other jurisdictions; and

"Whereas Ontarians deserve fair prescription drug prices so that families and seniors are not charged more than those in other countries; and

"Whereas some members of the opposition have sided with large corporations to preserve the status quo rather than make prescription medications more affordable for Ontario patients by supporting the proposed drug reforms;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That all members of the Ontario Legislature support Ontarians by passing the government's legislation to lower the cost of prescription medications."

I will be signing this petition.

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

Mr. Jim Wilson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Tim Hudak and the Ontario PC caucus support public health care and protecting access to front-line care;

"Whereas Ontario families have already given Dalton McGuinty \$15 billion in health taxes, which was wasted on the \$1-billion eHealth scandal. Now the McGuinty Liberals are cutting front-line public health care and putting independent pharmacies at risk;

"Dalton McGuinty's cuts will:

"—reduce pharmacy hours during evenings and weekends,

"—increase wait times and lineups for patients,

"—increase the out-of-pocket fees people pay for their medication and its delivery,

"—reduce critical patient health care services for seniors and people with chronic illnesses such as diabetes, heart disease and breathing problems;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government stop its cuts to pharmacies."

I agree with this petition and I'm signing it.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Phil McNeely: To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario from St. Matthew's high school: Samantha Watters, Lauren Gauthier and Tiffany Dunbar.

1530

"Whereas the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, in its 2007 report, concluded that without dramatic reductions in human-induced carbon dioxide emissions, climate change may bring 'abrupt and

irreversible effects on oceans, glaciers, land, coastlines and species;' and

"Whereas no one group, country or continent is responsible for climate change, but where all human beings are collectively responsible for solving the problem; and

"Whereas the production of greenhouse gases in Canada has increased by 27% over 1990 levels; and

"Whereas our elected leaders have a responsibility to report to the public on their actions with respect to halting climate change for the sake of accountability; and

"Whereas youth in particular have a special interest in this issue, being those that will inherit this earth, our only home.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario swiftly pass Bill 208,"—it's now Bill 6—"An Act to increase awareness of climate change."

I will sign this petition and send it up with Yidu.

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present a petition on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government is cutting front-line health care at pharmacies, which could mean higher prices, less service and even store closures....

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Stop the cuts to front-line health care at our pharmacy now."

This is signed by many of my constituents in the riding of Durham, and I'm pleased to support it on their behalf.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. Bill Mauro: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

"Whereas we currently have no psychiatric emergency service at the Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre in Thunder Bay, Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to support the creation of a psychiatric emergency service in emergency at the Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre in Thunder Bay, Ontario."

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have a petition that comes to me from Paisley, a small town in rural Ontario, and it's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ontario PC caucus supports public health care and protecting access to front-line care;

"Ontario families have already paid Dalton McGuinty \$15 billion in health taxes, which has been wasted on the

\$1-billion eHealth scandal. Now the McGuinty Liberals are cutting front-line public health care in our communities and putting independent rural pharmacies in Bruce and Grey at risk;

"Dalton McGuinty's cuts will:

"—reduce local pharmacy hours during evenings and weekends;

"—increase wait times and lineups for patients;

"—increase out-of-pocket fees people pay for their medication and its delivery; and

"—reduce critical health care services for seniors and people with chronic illnesses such as diabetes, heart disease and breathing problems;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government stop its cuts to rural pharmacies."

I've signed this and will give it to Ana.

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontarians pay more for popular generic drugs for diabetes, high blood pressure and other common health issues than patients in other jurisdictions; and

"Whereas Ontarians deserve fair prescription drug prices so that families and seniors are not charged more than those in other countries; and

"Whereas some members of the opposition have sided with large corporations to preserve the status quo rather than make prescription medications more affordable for Ontario patients by supporting the proposed drug reforms;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That all members of the Ontario Legislature support Ontarians by passing the government's legislation to lower the cost of prescription medications."

I support this petition and send it to the table by page Lars.

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

Mrs. Julia Munro: My petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government is cutting front-line health care at pharmacies, which could mean higher prices, less service and even store closures for us;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Stop the cuts to front-line health care at our pharmacy now."

As I am in agreement, I've signed my name and give it to page Sarah.

TAXATION

Mr. Jeff Leal: I have a petition today to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas a duplicated tax system puts our businesses at a disadvantage by increasing the costs of doing business; and

"Whereas a single, unified tax system reduces the burden on businesses by removing the provincial sales tax on goods and reducing administrative costs; and

"Whereas both Conservative and Liberal members of the provincial and federal Legislatures have voiced their support of a single sales tax; and

"Whereas local chambers of commerce, economists and experts are also supporting the move to a single tax system; and

"Whereas the recent RBC Economics report found that the HST is improving the competitiveness of Ontario businesses by lowering the cost of doing business in Ontario; and

"Whereas a harmonized sales tax is expected to create jobs for Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That all parties of the provincial Legislature support the government of Ontario's plan to implement the HST and other tax reforms to benefit Ontario businesses and consumers."

I will sign it.

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario from the good folks in Brockville. It reads as follows:

"Whereas Tim Hudak and the Ontario PC caucus support public health care and protecting access to front-line care;

"Whereas Ontario families have already given Dalton McGuinty \$15 billion in health taxes, which was wasted on the \$1-billion eHealth scandal. Now the McGuinty Liberals are cutting front-line public health care and putting independent pharmacies at risk;

"Dalton McGuinty's cuts will:

"—reduce pharmacy hours during evenings and weekends,

"—increase wait times and lineups for patients,

"—increase the out-of-pocket fees people pay for their medication and its delivery,

"—reduce critical patient health care services for seniors and people with chronic illnesses such as diabetes, heart disease and breathing problems;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government stop its cuts to pharmacies."

I certainly agree with the petition. I will affix my signature and send it to the table.

CHANGEMENT DE CLIMAT

M. Phil McNeely: J'ai une pétition à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario de l'école Gisèle-Lalonde. Anne

Emond, Dominic Muzar et Miguel Laurin l'ont signée, avec beaucoup d'autres personnes.

« À l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

« Attendu que dans son rapport de 2007, le Groupe d'experts intergouvernemental sur l'évolution du climat des Nations Unies a conclu que, sans des réductions dramatiques au niveau des émissions de dioxyde de carbone imputables à des activités humaines, les changements climatiques pourraient avoir des "effets soudains et irréversibles sur les océans, les glaciers, les terres, les littoraux et les espèces"; et

« Attendu qu'aucun groupe, pays ou continent n'assume la responsabilité des changements climatiques mais que tous les êtres humains sont collectivement responsables d'y apporter une solution; et

« Attendu que la production de gaz à effet de serre a augmenté de 27 % au-dessus des niveaux de 1990 au Canada; et

« Attendu que nos chefs élus ont la responsabilité de rendre compte aux membres du public de leurs gestes pour enrayer la problématique des changements climatiques par égard pour la redevabilité; et

« Attendu que les jeunes en particulier, héritiers éventuels de cette Terre, notre seul demeure, démontrent un intérêt spécial pour cette question;

« Nous, les soussignés, adressons une pétition à l'Assemblée législative pour demander que l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario adopte rapidement le projet de loi 208—là, c'est le projet de loi 6—« la Loi sur la sensibilisation aux changements climatiques. »

J'envoie ça avec Emma.

PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

Mr. Peter Shurman: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: On the subject of petitions and what is and is not appropriate in petitions, there has been some discussion during the petition period today of the phrase "in the pockets of big pharmacy." It's obviously your ruling that this may not be appropriate language.

I submitted this stack of petitions to the table today, not for verbal use, but they're petitions that have been read literally hundreds if not thousands of times over the course of the past eight months in this assembly. They were rejected and handed back to me because it was felt by the table, apparently, that the term "Dalton sales tax," or "DST," is inappropriate and somehow disrespectful. We've used that as nothing more than a moniker for a number of months, and I don't believe that, in any way, it's pejorative. I would appreciate a ruling from you on this before I take these petitions back and look at them as null and void. They're duly signed by my constituents.

Mr. Peter Kormos: On the same point of order, Speaker: With respect, I don't think you have any authority to do that. The standing order specifically gives the authority to the table. That's what the standing orders provide. I didn't draft them and, as I recall, I didn't vote for them, but that's a different story.

The standing orders give the authority to the Clerk, the table, to certify petitions. It's my submission that the Speaker has no authority whatsoever to overrule the table or to direct the table. The standing orders drafted by—I think I recall the member. The standing orders give that authority to the Clerk.

Quite frankly, it's a system that has worked reasonably well, but it's also an uncomfortable scenario to be confronting the table—we've talked about this before—when the table can't speak. They're officers of the assembly. Even to do that indirectly seems to be a difficult thing. It's a problem, but at the same time, anybody can simply table petitions without reading them in.

1540

Mr. Peter Shurman: On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker: With respect to what my friend from Welland has said, I don't take issue with his knowledge of the standing orders. My issue is with the fact that the table has apparently made an arbitrary decision sometime in the past week or two. These petitions with this wording have been read by myself and all of my colleagues and submitted to the table for months and months and months, and this is news to us.

I'd like a ruling on this, because it changes things in midstream.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I want to thank the members from Thornhill and Welland for their interjections. I'll come back specifically to the member from Thornhill in a moment.

First and foremost, I put my trust in the table to approve the petitions that are presented. That's extremely important.

I have a problem, though, with seeing the table being challenged on numerous occasions by members on all sides of this House, as petitions seem to be being used more and more for political debate rather than what they have been intended for: bringing to the attention of this House concerns of constituents. We're seeing it on both sides of the House in the petitions that are being presented to this chamber. I am becoming increasingly concerned. I'm frustrated by it. It is putting the table in a difficult position because even amongst the table, one member of the table could interpret something one way, and one may very well interpret it differently. I don't want the table to be put into that position on behalf of us in the House collectively.

We have one item already going to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly as of today. I intend to send a letter to the Chair of the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly. I intend to provide examples of petitions that have been approved, and I'm going to be sending copies of petitions that have not been approved. I ask that all members work in a collective way on what is best for the House and not work at the committee level in a partisan manner, because I'm sure that the frustration I have must be shared by other members in the House.

I trust that the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly will take a good hard look at petitions as to what they were intended to do in the first place and how

we seem to have deviated from what that original intention is—of using that to bring an important and pressing issue to the attention of the House—to turning into battling petitions of one side of the floor or the other. I can name a couple of issues—we've heard those very petitions—where the opposition reads one petition today opposed to it and the government reads another petition today in favour of it. I do intend to write to the committee and ask that.

Specifically to the issue that the member from Thornhill raised, I cannot stand here today and say that, yes, that petition that you presented to the table that was rejected by the table has been presented on a previous occasion. I will—and this is not questioning the table and the work that the table does, because it is incumbent on us all to stand by them—ascertain whether that petition that you chose to present today has been read into the record or not. I will get back to the member.

I trust that all members on the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly will take a hard, genuine look at the whole issue of petitions.

Mr. John O'Toole: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Last week, I presented for approval to the table a petition which named two members in the content of the petition, and the table advised me that it was not admissible to direct criticism of members, so I have not presented it. That petition had been given to me and signed by constituents. I wrote them and told them of the decision of the table, that it was not allowed; I wasn't clear on what circumstances. I sent them the copy that is online of the standard "To the province of Ontario.... Whereas.... Whereas," and forwarded that along with it, asking if they wanted to try some other mechanism.

It's my view that there has to be consistency. I'm only making this point in respect to the good order that you've made referring this to a committee, that there be a format. There is a format. If there are conditions around such things as name-specific, often they are about certain outcomes, whether it's the marsh that Mr. Hudak wants to protect or those organizations that wish to protect certain things. It has to be in a way that we can represent the wishes of our constituents without being personal or derogatory to the government or to the opposition side.

Mr. John Yakabuski: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I just want to remind the House where this all started. We're working off recollection here, but you'll recall when John Tory was the Leader of the Opposition here and the leader of the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party, and he identified two individuals. Shortly after that, two individuals who had the same name were presented to this House in the public gallery. John Tory had identified those individuals in some wrongdoing, as I recall. Those two other individuals who had the same names who felt that they were harmed by the words of Mr. Tory came forward in this House. We then saw, subsequent to that, petitions presented to this House from members on the government side that amounted to nothing more than ad hominem attacks on the integrity of John Tory. It was at that time that the Speaker ruled that those petitions were inadmissible.

It has since gone from that, unfortunately, to: Every time there is a reference to something that may be political at all—if people drew up a petition that identified the Premier by name—I question whether that's unparliamentary. But I think maybe that the issue got taken so far on that single event. I know that there are members in the House who presented those petitions. They know what it was all about. That's what started this whole downward slide with respect to how petitions could be presented in this House. I'm sure, Speaker, if you check the record, you'll recall what the circumstances were surrounding that. That's when this whole business began. I think that if we get back to presenting petitions without having ad hominem attacks on a member of this House, it will make it better for all of us.

1550

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Welland.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I am amazed that I'm here when this rather lengthy point of order is taking place. Speaker, we need your firm hand dealing with this issue. I appreciate that you want to refer the matter to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly.

Take a look at standing order 39(d), especially (ii): A petition shall "contain a clear, proper and respectful request...." It seems to me that that's what the Speaker is speaking to: "respectful."

You can also take a look—not you, but people in general; I'm not trying to tell the Speaker what standing orders to read—at 39(e): "Every member presenting a petition shall ensure that the petition conforms with the standing orders."

Speaker, I put to you that you've got the authority, pursuant to the standing orders, to control the tone as well as the content of petitions. The sort of zingers that we're talking about, the cheap political shots, are certainly not respectful and certainly aren't consistent with the goal of petitions.

This is a slippery slope. As I recall, it was Mr. Baird, my good friend Mr. Baird, who accepted responsibility for these particular standing orders—the amendments to the standing orders. Although I like him a great deal, I've never forgiven him for some of these.

With respect, the Legislative Assembly committee can look at this, but it seems to me that the standing order is already here and the Speaker has the authority. The slippery slope is because this standing order puts the table in an interesting position, a novel position. It's no different from any other officer of the assembly, be it the Environmental Commissioner or the Ombudsman, for instance—Mr. Marin, as it is at the moment. These are officers of the assembly; they should not be subjected to attacks. The Environmental Commissioner shouldn't be subjected to attacks; Mr. Marin shouldn't be subjected to attacks by the government or any other party, for instance; nor should the table.

They can't speak. The Speaker has been very clear about attacking people who aren't here to defend themselves. The table is here but they can't speak. I'm sug-

gesting to you, Speaker, that you've got to be firm about rejecting those types of—those are bad arguments to begin with and they should be rejected for that reason alone, but it's not in keeping with the important role of officers of the assembly.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I want to thank the honourable members for their comments. I hear very clearly—and, yes, if you want to blame somebody for a petition, don't blame the table; you can blame me.

The standing orders—39(a)—are very clear on the contents of petitions etc. Perhaps something that would be helpful is for all members to reread what is in the standing orders. Notwithstanding that, I would like the standing committee to take a look at the petitions to see if there are changes that anyone might recommend that should be made to the standing orders. I will commit to take a look at the one petition.

Mr. Bill Murdoch: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: It's on the same one. We do have petitions here that are in limbo. What would you suggest? The committee is not going to look at it—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'm suggesting that you deliver the petitions as we have done in the past to the table. If the table says no to the petition, that is the Speaker saying no to the petition.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

LOWERING ENERGY COSTS FOR NORTHERN ONTARIANS ACT, 2010 LOI DE 2010 SUR LA RÉDUCTION DES COÛTS D'ÉNERGIE POUR LES ONTARIENS DU NORD

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 3, 2010, on the motion for second reading of Bill 44, An Act to implement the Northern Ontario energy credit / Projet de loi 44, Loi mettant en oeuvre le crédit pour les coûts d'énergie dans le Nord de l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: As I was saying yesterday, this particular measure that the government brings forward in the budget, I want to say upfront, is not a bad thing. It is a step in the right direction, but certainly what I was trying to say to the House yesterday was, don't look at this as the thing you're going to hang your hat on that resolves the problems of energy prices in the province of Ontario and specifically for northern Ontario. We need to look at what this is.

Number one, the government is moving forward on an initiative that will give a 25% decrease by way of a credit to those who are able to qualify in the industrial sector in northern Ontario—everybody north of Parry Sound—and a 25% decrease or a credit in electricity prices for residents in northern Ontario—north of Parry Sound again—who are 18 years of age and older and under a certain income level.

To say this is a bad thing—absolutely not. You can't say that. It is a step in the right direction, but I just want to say to the government very clearly that this does not resolve our problem. So let's go through where we're at.

The government about four years ago, I would say, recognized that the energy policies, which had first been put in place by the Conservatives and then followed by the Liberals and accelerated, were hurting northern Ontario and Ontario manufacturers. The government recognized that for those industrial users of electricity, such as pulp and paper mills, this was a huge problem because anywhere from 25% to 30% of a pulp and paper mill's overall costs are electricity costs. In other plants around Ontario, electricity charges are not anywhere near that percentage of the overall cost, but in the case of a foundry, a smelter, a refinery or the pulp and paper industry, certainly electricity is a huge cost. In the case of pulp and paper, depending on the mill, 25% to 30% is the cost of electricity as the overall cost of doing business.

The government recognized three, four years ago, I believe, that something had to be done and the government of the day moved forward, the McGuinty government in the previous term, with what I call the pulp and paper energy credit program. There's another name for it, DR1, DR4, whatever you want to call it technically. It was DR1, DR2 and DR3, and then I think we were talking about DR4 at one point. But the point was that the government recognized that it needed to do something to try to address electricity prices.

What they essentially did was to offer up what amounted to an 18% credit on an industrial user's hydro bill if you operated a pulp and paper mill in Ontario and qualified for the program. The issue is that this 18% credit was coming due this fall, I believe it was, so the government was in a position that it had to do something. Certainly those people in the industry and those people in the energy industry were lobbying that the government had to extend this program. It was crucial, in the case of those mills that are fortunate enough to be left open, such as Tembec in Kap and others in different places; that if that program was not renewed, they'd be in deep trouble.

So the government had to renew something, and I think the government was quite clever. They recognized that this 18% program in itself didn't respond to all of the needs of northern Ontario users on the industrial side, so they needed to expand it. That's something that I say to the government was a good thing to do. You should expand that program so it affects other people. They moved it from 18% to 25%. So now the government says if you're an industrial user in northern Ontario, north of Parry Sound, and you meet certain criteria, you can apply for and get a 25% credit on your electricity bill once this bill is proclaimed into law.

I just want to say to the government, a step in the right direction, but does that fix the problem? I think the answer is, resoundingly, no. We still have a huge problem when it comes to electricity prices in this province when it comes to industrial users. I know the Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry will know

that well because he's dealing with these people on a daily basis, the Xstratas of this world, the pulp and paper industries of this world and others who are saying, "We have a huge problem."

Electricity prices are scheduled to go up in the not-too-distant future. There is an application for a 10% increase on electricity prices in the province of Ontario, and the HST is coming into vogue come July 1, and that means it's going to affect those people who've got to pay electricity in this province by at least 18% on the top end. So the 25% that people are getting is really not 25%. That's the point that I'm trying to make, because it's offset by the additional charges you're going to get on your hydro bill as a result of the increase and the HST.

1600

The other issue is that of the global adjustment, and I want to speak to this very specifically. The government, rightfully so, has said, "We want to invest in green energy in the province of Ontario." I don't think there's a member in this House who thinks the investments in green energy are a bad thing. The question is, how do you pay for them? Part of the problem that we have in the way that the green energy projects and other projects by OPG are being put into line, such as the refurbishment of our nuclear plants, additional generation on the Niagara River, hydroelectric plants in northern Ontario and green energy, are all being put on the hydro bill. We're signing contracts that are pretty lucrative for some. We're talking about contracts that say, "You're going to get a rate higher than what the industrial hydro rate is for generating electricity, and if we buy it or not, we're going to pay it to you anyway." They're doing that as a way to be able to allow those individuals who are getting in the business of building these hydroelectric, green energy or whatever plants a way to finance themselves, because they've got to show that they can get a return on investment.

The entire cost of this is being put into the global adjustment rate. The global adjustment rate is something that's put in everybody's individual hydro bill and every industrial user's. Up until about a year ago, the global adjustment was never contemplated to put a heck of a lot of cost on a person's hydro bill or an industrial user's. It was always seen as being minor in effect. But what we're looking at right now is, as of this winter, the global adjustment going through the roof. Even though the rate of electricity is going down—and the rate of electricity has gone down—the global adjustment has picked up whatever savings you got on the rate decrease. As a result, we're paying more for electricity now than we were paying before the rates started to go down, so much so that industrial users across this province are having to pay a heck of a lot more for electricity on a per-month basis than they did in the past. As I stated in this House before, in the case of Tembec in Kapuskasing, you're looking at \$1.8 million per month that they're paying in additional electricity charges that they weren't paying a year ago because of the global adjustment.

So I'm not arguing that we shouldn't be doing green energy. I'm not arguing that we should not be doing

refurbishment. That is not my argument. My argument is, how do we pay for it, and should we socialize some of the costs of this? I think it's a fair debate to have, because if you throw it on top of the hydro rate, what you're going to do is you're going to discourage industrial hydro users from conserving. You need to understand, if the global adjustment goes through the roof, there's no incentive for the industrial user to save energy by reducing the demand that they have for electricity on a day-by-day, a minute-by-minute basis because that's what companies do in the province.

Most members don't understand this. If my global adjustment goes up, and my rate of electricity goes down, there is nothing in it for me as an industrial user to try to reduce the amount of electricity. From an economic standpoint it makes no sense. You know what? From an environmental standpoint, it makes absolutely no sense, because we all know that reduction in demand is really one of the ways that we can have a huge effect on lessening our footprint when it comes to whatever energy projects are out there as they affect their environment.

I'm saying to the government across the way that we will vote in favour of this particular bill as New Democrats, because we do think it's a step in the right direction. But I want to be very clear: It is a very, very small step. It is so small, Tiny Tim would have to make tippytoe marks in order to see how far this brings us down the state of being able to resolve this issue.

I say to the government across the way, you still have a huge problem when it comes to your energy policies in this province, and I think this government, quite frankly, has rushed to try to get somewhere, that being whatever their policy might be around new generation, and they've basically thrown the baby out with the bath water.

Again, I want to say, there's not a member in this House who doesn't agree that there needs to be refurbishment of our current electrical stock when it comes to generation. We all know that has to go on on an ongoing basis, whether it be hydroelectric, NUGs, nuclear plants, green energy or whatever it might be. Nobody argues that we shouldn't be doing these things. The question is, how much of it can we do and how affordable can it be if we throw it on top of the actual rate that industrial users have to use? I say to you now in this House today that if we don't get this issue under control, you're going to see more plants that are large electrical consumers in this province close, because it will drive the price up and close the plants down.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments.

Mr. Bill Mauro: I thank the member from Timmins—James Bay for his comments. I've got in my hand the bill we're debating today, Bill 44, An Act to implement the Northern Ontario energy credit. I'm having a bit of a tough time following the conversation from the member. I think there was a bit of a mixed message there in terms of what he was discussing. This bill is solely about the northern Ontario energy credit and the relief this will bring to people in northern Ontario.

What I want to say, though, is that what the member did talk about was the 25% reduction in the large industrial rate that we brought in in our budget this year, an enhancement of the previous program, so I will speak about that a bit as well. He was right: It was 18 cents, which is extremely significant—\$18 per megawatt hour. We've enriched it to \$20 per megawatt hour for three years—a 25% reduction—a program that has value-added about \$150 million per year for those large industrials.

The member says, "Is this going to fix it?", and he says no. Of course it's not going to fix it; that's what I've been saying for six years. The member makes our argument for us. Why isn't it going to fix it by itself? Because 200 mills in Canada have closed over the last six or seven years in areas with very low energy costs. We've been saying this for six years. Of course this isn't the only problem that these large industrials face. AbitibiBowater has a \$6.2-billion debt, \$1.2 billion of that attributed to a pension shortfall. Newsprint demand globally has gone down 50% in the last five years. The appreciation in the value of the Canadian dollar adds about \$100 million to the mill in my riding—one mill—on an annual basis.

Is the energy pricing piece going to fix all of that? Of course not. But we did what we could. We're controlling the parts that we can, as well as uploading the cost of roads, taking care of stumpage—providing some relief there—and significant relief on energy pricing as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: I want to credit the member from Timmins–James Bay as standing up for his constituents and also addressing the bill. He's right, because the bill does not address one single thing that the previous member spoke of. This is the residential rate, and it's a credit based on income, with threshold tests.

It's actually an insult to the north when in fact the industry, as the Minister of Northern Development and Mines knows, is all about the inappropriateness of the current energy policies.

I commend the member—that this bill should have been a section in Bill 16, the budget bill. That's where it belonged. This is strictly politics, and it's an unnecessary waste of the time of this House, because we support—the poor policy on energy for all of Ontario. This policy is literally crippling seniors, persons with illnesses who are affected by having reliable, affordable energy. I am so disappointed with the underhanded way that Premier McGuinty and his puppet Minister of Energy are dealing with a very important part of our economy.

I look at this bill, a very small bill. We caucused it today, and there was generally very broad support for the plight of northern Ontarians and also the plight of many other Ontarians. This bill is nothing but politics, Mr. Mauro. I can tell you that we would only—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I just remind you to address the Chair.

Mr. John O'Toole: —the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan, a good member, I might say as well,

speaking for the energy that has been lost in northern Ontario.

But the member from Timmins–James Bay has done a great service to his community all along. On this, on the Attawapiskat mine and the mining bill he had last week—all of this is predicated on having a lousy energy policy for all of Ontario. This is nothing but cheap politics, and it's a good example of how Premier McGuinty is wasting the time of this House with bills like this that should have been in the budget bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions.

Mr. Peter Kormos: The member for Timmins–James Bay, of course, is a lifelong northerner. It's not just a matter of living up there; he has worked up there and he has travelled the north as extensively as anybody could. He knows northern issues. He knows the north, all the way from the James Bay–Hudson Bay coastline down to the gold mines—and now the diamond mines. I say to you that he, along with Howard Hampton from Kenora–Rainy River—it's interesting, because you've got all of northern Ontario sort of sliced down the middle. You've got Gilles Bisson, Timmins–James Bay, on the right towards the east on the Quebec border, and then you've got Howard Hampton and Kenora–Rainy River to the west on the Manitoba–Minnesota border, so I listen carefully when Mr. Bisson talks about northern issues.

1610

I've had the occasion, and I encourage those who Mr. Bisson may give the opportunity to, to travel to some of the north with Mr. Bisson. Mr. Bisson—

Mr. Bruce Crozier: I want to go flying with him.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Yes, Mr. Bisson is a pilot. I flew with him once.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: And never again.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I flew with him once and he's a very competent, skilled pilot, but it was a very small plane. Mr. Bisson and I—I was fatter then—we were both very big people in a very small plane. We flew to where we went to and I hitched a ride back; he flew the plane back in the morning.

I'm looking forward to the chance to speak to this in my own right in a few minutes' time.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I can't resist having an opportunity to comment as well. I don't want to focus on the comments from the member for Durham, but I find it just extraordinary to listen to him rant on. After having spent eight years myself in opposition when his party was in government as they devastated northern Ontario with health care cuts, education cuts, cuts to the public service and to the Ministry of Natural Resources, it's unbelievable to listen to him rant on. I'd rather focus, if I may, in the short time I have, and comment on the remarks that were made by my colleague from Timmins–James Bay, who does indeed understand the issues extremely well.

First of all, I'm very grateful. I think what the member is saying is that indeed he supports the industrial energy

rate that our government announced in the March 25 budget, and we appreciate that. I'm going to work on the premise as well that, although you didn't spend much time addressing the northern Ontario energy credit, you would support that as well. Certainly, the legislation we're debating today is very much reflective of the McGuinty government's very clear understanding that energy costs are higher in northern Ontario, that we have different circumstances that bring that about, and this assistance, which will be for low- and middle-income earners, will make a real difference in terms of northerners. I know that my colleague from Thunder Bay—Atikokan was in Thunder Bay yesterday with Minister Duncan. They were unveiling it yesterday and, of course, we're debating it today.

The other thing that needs to be said: We just had a budget that was as northern-Ontario focused as I've certainly seen in my 15 years here as a member of the Legislature: record highway spending, \$773 million, up 20% from last year—extraordinary; \$45 million for skills development for the Ring of Fire, an economic opportunity that's happening up there, part of our Open Ontario plan—many reasons why northerners understand that the McGuinty government truly understands the needs of northern Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I want to thank all those members who commented on my presentation. I just want to say to members, I'm not giving this bill and this initiative a thumbs-up, this is wonderful, this is great, high five—no, no. I want the minister to clearly understand: I'm saying this is a step in the right direction, but there's still a long ways to go.

The electricity prices are an issue, and contrary to what my honoured colleague from Thunder Bay has to say, which is that it's everything else that's the problem—it's the Canadian dollar, it's the market—yes, those are part of it, but a large part of it is electricity prices. I just went through six months or four months or whatever it is since last December, the announcement of the Xstrata foundry, refinery and smelter in Timmins, and they were quite categoric. They sat in the Premier's office first with him individually—because the Premier has conveyed this to me—and they sat there collectively with the mayor of the city of Timmins in the room, the Premier in the room, the head of CAW—well, no, the head of the coalition in the room—and said that electricity prices are a large part of the problem. Absolutely. So for companies like Xstrata—I think we could have done something in order to keep them here—the 25% didn't do it. That's the point that I'm making: If 25% was the answer, Xstrata would have turned their decision around and would have said, "We're not shutting down the smelter-refinery in the city of Timmins."

So I want to say to the government: a step forward, absolutely. I'm not going to stand in this House and say that this is terrible; that would be the wrong thing to do. But I don't want you getting the impression that New

Democrats and myself individually as the member for Timmins—James Bay are giving this a thumbs-up and saying, "Problem solved," because the problem is not solved. We still have a long way to go. I think there are going to be other Xstratas of this world knocking on our door doing exactly what Xstrata did, and one of the reasons will be electricity prices.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate.

Mr. Bill Mauro: I'm pleased to have an opportunity this afternoon for 10 minutes. I'll be sharing my time with the member from Nipissing; I'm assuming she's going to be back by then.

I'm very pleased, I must say, to offer my comments on Bill 44, the northern Ontario energy credit. This is the legislation that—

Mr. John O'Toole: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I don't think you're able to mention that a member is not in the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I think that's fine.

Continue.

Mr. Bill Mauro: Speaker, thank you very much. I'm very pleased to have my 10 minutes only—I wish it was more—on this particular piece, the northern Ontario energy credit. It is the bill we're discussing today. Others have spent very little time addressing it, unfortunately. I just want to say how very proud I am of our entire northern caucus, who worked very hard on this particular issue, and of our government for bringing it forward and adopting it in our budget that was just delivered in the House on March 25 this year.

Let's talk about the numbers briefly for a second so I can put a fine point on them. I know that others want to ignore this, especially the NDP. I've read the Hansard of what the member from Kenora—Rainy River had to say yesterday when he was supposed to be addressing this issue. He spent almost no time talking about what this will do in terms of relief for people in northern Ontario.

To remind people; this is only for northerners. What we're bringing forward is a credit: up to \$130 for individuals; up to \$200 for families. That is relief brought forward only for people in northern Ontario. But more to the point, the NDP—mostly, and I give some credit to the Conservatives; at least they're not just doing that—want to look into the camera and they want to portray this credit, when they rarely talk about it, as if it's the only credit or grant or tax reform or mitigating measure coming forward from our government in our budget in 2009 and in this year's budget. They want people in northern Ontario to think that this is the only piece, and it's not. It is not the only piece. But it is the only piece that is specific only to northern Ontario.

So, single people up to \$130; families up to \$200. The way I like to characterize this for people to try and remember—because I think it's a little number that we can all keep attached and give some sort of context to what the relief will do. For every \$100 of relief that we bring in, through either this credit, another grant,

personal income tax reduction or whatever form our tax mitigation measures may take, you as an individual have to spend \$1,250 on something that was previously PST-exempt.

Let's use the northern Ontario tax credit as an example. Up to \$200—and the threshold, I should say; this is income-tested, both of those, and the thresholds are quite high, and we're very proud of that. It's a very progressive piece. For somebody earning or getting the full \$200, they're going to have to spend \$2,500 on items that were previously tax-exempt once the HST comes into effect on July 1.

For others to stand in their place and attempt to minimize this I suggest is unfortunate. I understand that there's a role for the opposition to play, but I think at some point the people not only in northern Ontario but in the entire province of Ontario are going to begin, as we go forward with this over the next 18 months, asking the opposition members, why is it that they didn't tell us the other half of the story? Why is it that they're only telling us about the part that the combined single sales tax is going to apply to, those 17% of the items that previously did not have PST that will now be taxable under the HST. Why are they only telling us about the increases? Why are the opposition members not talking to us or sharing the fuller story with us?

1620

These are facts. They're easily found out and easily verifiable. That's why, as I've said before, we're not seeing a whole lot of people—especially the low end, the people living in poverty, lower- and middle-income earners in the province of Ontario—railing against the implementation of the HST, because they understand. They know what's going on. Those people are fierce advocates for the people they represent, and they understand. They've taken the time to investigate the issue, and they know exactly what it's bringing forward. I think it's important for people to know that.

The energy file is a very interesting one. I have to provide a bit of context and some history. Yes, energy prices are going up, but energy prices have gone up under every government since 1990. That's my basis. I'll use 1990 to go forward, because since 1990 in the province of Ontario all three parties have had the opportunity and the responsibility to govern in Ontario. Under the NDP, from 1990 to 1995, energy prices went up 35% to 40%. That's the number I have. I'm not sure if it's accurate or right on. Maybe it was 30%; maybe it was 45%. I've got a 35% to 40% increase in this cost of energy under the NDP from 1990 to 1995—in five years.

The NDP, by the way, especially for people in northern Ontario—they're very interested in this one. In the late 1980s, the then-Liberal government had signed a deal with the government of Manitoba for a project called Conawapa that would have brought 1,200 megawatts of clean, green, extremely affordable energy into the province of Ontario through northwestern Ontario, which would have created an economic boom in northwestern Ontario with the transmission that was required to be

constructed. The deal was signed between the Liberal government in Ontario and the government of Manitoba in the late 1980s. After the election in 1990, the NDP came in and they cancelled that contract with the government of Manitoba. As memory serves me, they paid about \$40 million to the government of Manitoba—I could be wrong on the number—to get out of that particular contract.

The point is that everybody who has had the opportunity to govern in the province has a history on the energy file. The Conservatives, we know as well, will say that they didn't raise energy prices too much while they were in power. They went up under them as well. The numbers I'm given are anywhere from 20% to 40%; I don't know what the number is. But we also know that when they froze rates, that didn't mean that there weren't costs accruing to the taxpayers in the province of Ontario. It went off the rate base and it went onto the debt retirement charge. When they froze it, that's where it went. They hid it. They didn't want to deal with it.

We know that when we came in in 2003 we had just suffered a severe blackout in the province of Ontario. We know that there had been no investment in new generation. We know that there had been no investment in transmission upgrades. We know that we had very little, if any, green energy going on in the province of Ontario. So we've had to take a very aggressive approach on this particular file.

I want to re-emphasize the point I made at the beginning of my remarks about this northern Ontario energy tax credit, available only for northerners. But it's important, again, that I restate that this is not the only tax mitigation measure that we have brought in, including both budgets in 2009 and this budget in 2010. When the opposition members talk about this as being small or falling short of the mark or being insignificant—going out of their way to minimize the impact of this—it's important that I remind people, especially in northern Ontario, where this credit will only accrue, that it is not the only measure.

For example, the 1% reduction in the personal income tax rate on your first \$37,000; for anybody who makes \$37,000, that means \$370 in your pocket. I'm not sure if you're going to get the full \$370 or if you'll have to take it into income and it gets taxed and maybe you end up with \$300, depending on your tax rate, but for argument's sake, I'll take the more conservative number and say that it's \$300. That \$300 equates to you having to spend \$3,750 on previously PST-exempt items to use up that one tax reduction measure.

I described the northern Ontario credit for you a minute ago. For a person who gets the full \$100 credit, that's \$1,250; if you get the full \$200 credit, that's \$2,500. I just described another \$3,500 over here.

You can see how you have to expend a lot of money on what were previously PST-exempt items before you're going to use up the full width and breadth of the measures that we have brought in.

I want to say once again, as I conclude and hand off to the member from Nipissing, that I'm very proud of the

northern caucus and I'm very proud that our government has brought this forward for only northern Ontario. We have, by anyone's definition, gone through the greatest recession since the Great Depression. Given the context that we all find ourselves in right now, I'm especially proud that we were able to find the capacity to do this item for northern Ontario, as well as the large industrial rate that we brought in specifically for northern Ontario, expanding it to other industry; and also the increase to the northern Ontario heritage fund.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Nipissing.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I'm very pleased today to have the opportunity to speak to Bill 44, An Act to implement the Northern Ontario energy credit. This is a very important act for the people in my riding of Nipissing and for all the people of northern Ontario.

I was very pleased to be at a meeting of the Parry Sound municipalities association last Friday morning with my colleague from Parry Sound—Muskoka, where he spoke very positively of the new energy tax credit.

Mr. Norm Miller: You were so enthusiastic.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I am very enthusiastic, as you know, Mr. Miller, and I was thrilled to hear you speaking enthusiastically about the fact that the good people of Parry Sound will be entitled.

We're proposing a new permanent northern Ontario energy credit that would help eligible low- and middle-income northern residents with their energy costs. This is a key piece of our 2010 budget.

What I think is really impressive about this new credit is the fact that 250,000 families and single people—more than half of the people living in northern Ontario—are going to benefit from this credit. We're providing \$35 million in assistance in the first year of its implementation.

This credit is for northern residents aged 18 and older who rent or own property, or pay property tax for their principal residence. They'll be eligible for this annual credit.

A single person, as my colleagues have already described, will be eligible for a credit of up to \$130, while a family would be eligible for up to \$200, including single parents. I think that's a very important inclusion, that single parents will qualify under the family provisions. People living on northern reserves who incur residential energy costs would also be eligible for the credit.

This credit is there for those who need it most, and that's why it's income-tested. It would be reduced for a single person with an adjusted net income over \$35,000 and will be eliminated when his or her income exceeds \$48,000. In the case of families, it will be reduced starting at \$45,000 and eliminated at \$65,000.

Again, we can't lose sight of the fact that we are assisting 250,000 families and single people in northern Ontario. My colleague from Thunder Bay—Atikokan noted a couple of times in his address, and I want to

emphasize as well, that this is simply for the folks in northern Ontario.

My northern colleagues and I—the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, the Minister of Community Safety, the member for Sault Ste. Marie, the member for Thunder Bay—Atikokan and the member for Algoma—Manitoulin—gather together regularly as the northern caucus to discuss issues of northern concern. This was very much a concern for us, which we raised with the Minister of Finance. We're delighted to see it contained in this year's budget.

Other initiatives in the 2010 budget that were incredibly important to us include the three-year northern industrial electricity rate program, which is averaging about \$150 million a year, that will provide electricity price rebates, reducing the price of electricity for our large industrial clients by up to 25%. This is incredibly important for the north as well, and something which I heard a great deal about from my chamber of commerce, from my local businesses, from people who were concerned about large industry in the north and the impact that our hydro costs were having on those industries.

Another issue which is of great interest, and which my mayor recently highlighted on his website, is the new Ring of Fire. In our 2010 budget, we announced the creation of a Ring of Fire coordinator to lead the collective effort to advance the economic promise of this area. The Ring of Fire is truly resonating as an initiative that's going to benefit all of the north. It's an exciting initiative that I think will have a great impact on the north for years to come.

As part of our emphasis and focus on that, the province has also announced \$45 million over three years for new project-based skills training programs to help aboriginal people and northern Ontarians participate and benefit from emerging economic development opportunities, such as the Ring of Fire.

We want to make sure that our aboriginal communities in the north are engaged, have the required skills to really become focused and engaged in these new economic development initiatives that are developing in the north.

1630

We are seeing unseen investments in our post-secondary education. Through this initiative and through others, we are seeing our colleges and universities in the north truly thrive. I wanted to highlight a couple of announcements that we've done just simply since the new year began in 2010.

The government is investing \$556,000 to support aboriginal learners at Canadore College and \$468,000 to support aboriginal learners at Nipissing University. This is a bursary program that will help students with financial need to attend the college and the university and to assist them in their studies. That was announced in January 2010.

In May, just this week, actually, we announced that we are supporting improvements to the aboriginal centres at Nipissing and Canadore. We are very privileged to have wonderful aboriginal centres at both Nipissing University

and Canadore College that really support a range of activities and initiatives that are focused on making the college or university experience a good one for our aboriginal communities.

As you know, a lot of our students from the aboriginal communities are coming from very isolated aboriginal communities in the Far North, and to come to North Bay or any centre in the province, it's a huge adjustment for them and their families. Our aboriginal centres provide an incredible amount of support, and they provide initiatives that make sure that those students feel welcome, feel part of the community and do not feel isolated in their new homes.

Just this week, we announced that we're investing \$75,000 more at Nipissing and \$25,000 more at Canadore to improve the aboriginal student space by providing minor renovations, new furniture and new computers, and to ensure that the space is as comfortable and inviting as it can possibly be for these students as they adjust.

As well, coming out of the spring budget, we saw Canadore and Nipissing receive additional funding as part of our five-year Open Ontario plan to create new opportunities for job and economic growth. To that end, Canadore received \$815,000 and Nipissing University received \$2.3 million to assist them in creating a great learning environment for students from across the province.

As you know, I've spoken on a number of occasions in the House about how proud I am of my two institutions and how well they work together as they're co-located on the same campus and as they focus to work with our employers across the region to assist them in developing the workforce that they need to create the economic development that we need across the north.

We were also incredibly happy to see that the provincial government will be continuing to increase the funds in the northern Ontario heritage fund. This year, that fund is being increased by another \$10 million, which is hugely important for the north. Those funds go towards helping new young entrepreneurs—and I've got a list as long as my arm this week of new young entrepreneurs across my region who are going to see about \$25,000 in assistance to help them set up their new businesses. These are young people who are either moving back home or who haven't left the city, and we want to make sure that they feel like they are supported in their new initiatives. Small business is the backbone of our smaller communities, and these new entrepreneurs are taking on some great new ideas in our communities, and we're particularly proud of them.

We've also expanded our entrepreneur program under the northern Ontario heritage fund. I know my colleagues agree with me that that expansion has been incredibly important for the northern Ontario heritage fund. I'm seeing a number of new initiatives being invested in in my riding that include some new green energy initiatives that are incredibly important.

I have one entrepreneur in my community who's affiliated with the college who's doing a great deal of

work in solar and really promoting solar power for homes and businesses across the region. Through some help from the northern Ontario heritage fund, he'll be able to continue the growth of his business.

All of these things are helping northerners through these difficult economic times. As my friend from Thunder Bay—Atikokan outlined, there are a number of initiatives in our budget, in our whole tax package, that are helping people through these difficult economic times and move towards the future.

But I have to say that as we've been talking about our full tax package over the last year, the one thing I heard loud and clear from my constituents over and over again was around energy costs and the concern they had around energy costs, because we in the north pay more for energy for our homes. Our winters are colder and our winters are longer, and it takes a lot to heat our homes in the north. A lot of people do not have access to other forms of energy and, in fact, only have hydro as their energy source. So this initiative that we've introduced, by lowering the energy costs for northern Ontarians, is really appropriate and really what our folks are asking for back home.

I am delighted to stand here in support of this bill. I'm delighted to hear that my colleagues on the other side, although somewhat lukewarm at times, have been stating their support for the bill, and that my friend from Parry Sound—Muskoka was pleased that it's going to apply to his residents of Parry Sound.

It is an important initiative for all of the residents of the north. This is really something that they've called for, that they've asked for and that we are delighted to be delivering. It will help, as I've said, 250,000 families and individuals, about half the population of northern Ontario. I know that my friend from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, when he's finished his musical interlude, will be delighted to speak to the benefits of this credit for our northern residents and the importance that it has especially for our low- and mid-income families across the north.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this bill today.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Questions and comments?

Mr. Norm Miller: I would say to the member, I wouldn't be encouraging the member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke to do any musical interludes here in the Legislature because he'll probably take the member up on it.

Both the member from Sault Ste. Marie and the member from Nipissing certainly talked about lots of things in the budget. They didn't spend all that much time talking about Bill 44.

I will say to the member from Nipissing that yes, at the Parry Sound municipal association meeting I did talk about energy, mainly from the point of view that this legislation is necessary because the prices that people are going to be paying in this province are going up so dramatically.

I know the member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke pointed out yesterday, when he spoke to this

bill, that energy cost have gone up 74% to this point, and that's before we saw this most recent Ontario Energy Board 10% increase; that's before the \$57-million sort of backdoor charge that's going to be going on everybody's bill, and more importantly, that's before July 1 and the 8% HST on electricity for residents not only of northern Ontario but everywhere.

I'd point out that residents in the north tend to drive a lot more as well, so they'll be paying that HST on their gas. Many people tend to have trucks in the north, tend to burn a little bit more gas, so they'll be paying more on that as well. So they're going to need this tax credit.

It is a pretty darn small amount. If you make \$47,000 a year and you're a single person, you'll get four cheques for \$10 a year. It's going to cost the government more to send those \$10 cheques out than the value. If you make \$63,000 in your family you'll get that \$10 cheque four times a year. So they're going to pay a lot more on those charges that I just talked about.

I do ask about the issue of fairness. What about Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke? What about Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock? Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock has the lowest family income in the province, and if you look at the temperature it's not that much different than a lot of places in the north.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

Mr. Peter Kormos: I listened carefully to the comments by the member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan and, of course, the comments by the honourable government House leader, who's up in North Bay and area. Mind you, I've got to say that the member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan mentioned the NDP more often than he mentioned Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals. If people want to do a Hansard search, go to Hansard, type in "Mauro" and "NDP" on today's date, May 4, and you'll see how many times he said "NDP." It may be some sort of obsession. Maybe there's a reason for that. I didn't mind, because brand identification is an important part of marketing; that was fine by me.

I've spent a fair amount of time in my life up in Thunder Bay, I've spent a fair amount of time in the equally beautiful area of North Bay and I'm looking forward to the summer months when I'll be able to drive up there. It's only what, four hours from Toronto? Do you really call that the north? It's only four hours from Toronto. I just find it strange because it's nothing to drive up there from Toronto and at the roadside stands pick up a six-quart basket of wild blueberries. I just don't see it as the north. I'm going to have a chance to speak to this in a little while, but I just wonder how the people feel who live one kilometre south of the border and don't get the cheque? They're going to be royally ticked off, aren't they?

1640

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you.

Mr. Norm Miller: On a point of order, Speaker: I just want to correct the record. I meant the member from

Thunder Bay–Atikokan, not the member from Sault Ste. Marie.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you.

The member for Peterborough.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I had the opportunity to hear the remarks from my colleagues from Thunder Bay–Atikokan and Nipissing. The north has been under tremendous pressure in the last number of years. One area, of course, where the exchange rate differential was so important was both the mineral industry and the pulp and paper industry in northern Ontario. They traditionally use the difference in the exchange rate to compensate for the distance travelled for their finished product to be delivered and also for the growing seasons. The growing season in northern Ontario is not quite as long as other jurisdictions throughout the world that are in similar industries.

We've also witnessed a decline in the forestry industry in British Columbia, Manitoba, Quebec and other provinces in Canada that were involved there. So this is not just an Ontario-only situation. And the fact that we've seen tremendous changes in the newspaper industry—one of the products that has been manufactured in Ontario for many, many years is broadsheet newsprint, principally shipped south of the border, and we've seen the decline of major newspapers as people more and more seek their news electronically.

The other area that was hit hard was the finished lumber industry because of the slump in the United States housing market. So the perfect storm came into play in northern Ontario, and as a government we've brought forward a number of programs, championed by the members from Thunder Bay–Atikokan, Nipissing and Algoma–Manitoulin, to address some of those structural problems that are indeed occurring right now in northern Ontario.

To recognize the distances travelled, we've put forward Bill 44, which is the northern energy tax credit, an income-tested program, to help those citizens in northern Ontario who need this assistance at this particular time.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's my pleasure to comment on the comments: the speech by the member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan and also the government House leader, who also spoke. I was actually paying more attention when the member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan was speaking because I was actually teaching my friend Peter Kormos a new country song during some of the member for Nipissing's dissertation.

I did want to talk about some of the things that the member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan said. He talked about how he was upset that Howard Hampton yesterday wasn't saying wonderful things about the government. I really didn't know that it was Howard Hampton's job to speak in favour of the government.

The member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan did talk about the government reducing the income tax rate by 1%, and

this meant roughly \$300. I guess that's his job—but that guy who's getting the \$300 credit is paying \$350 more, just in hydro. That's got nothing to do with the 8% that's going on his gasoline, the 8% that's going on his heating fuel—that's got nothing to do with it. This is just their energy costs for electricity, \$350 this year because of the policies of this government. So for that member to stand in his place and try to portray this government as doing something positive for people when it comes to energy costs is absolutely shameful.

I say to the member from Nipissing as well, because she knows—we actually share the district of Nipissing. I have a very, very small, very sparsely populated portion, but as my friend from Welland says, on one side of that border between Nipissing and Renfrew county, that house gets a credit, and on the other side of that dividing line, no credit.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The minister will respond.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: To the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke: If it was in my power to take the word "Nipissing" out of your riding name, I certainly would.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's not.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: But it's not, unfortunately.

We are very proud in Nipissing to be part of the north, and I know that the folks of Nipissing are very pleased with the initiatives that they found in this year's budget that our government put out.

I want to thank my colleagues from northern Ontario who worked so diligently to ensure that these initiatives were in this budget: the members from Algoma-Manitoulin, Thunder Bay-Atikokan, Thunder Bay-Superior North, Sault Ste. Marie and Sudbury. Together we have worked diligently on behalf of the folks of northern Ontario to ensure that their voices are heard here at Queen's Park and that their concerns are addressed. I think that this bill in particular highlights—

Interjections.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Of course, the people from Nipissing and Cochrane and the people from Parry Sound to Muskoka are also going to benefit from this as well—and Nickel Belt. I'm speaking of their representatives, who worked very hard on behalf of their constituents to ensure that this provision is in—

Mr. John Yakabuski: David Ramsay does.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Of course. Thank you for correcting my omission of my friend from Timiskaming-Cochrane.

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome to the House today Ferdinand Gill, who's here with the consul general of Barbados. As well, Dr. Leroy McClean, who is the consul general of Barbados. They're both here today.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you, and welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: In my capacity as Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs I had the privilege of welcoming them here today. I was truly delighted that they were able to join us for part of my address and learn

a little bit about northern Ontario. So I'm glad you were here to join us today, and I appreciate that.

I want to thank the House for the opportunity to speak to this bill today.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate.

Mr. Peter Shurman: It's a pleasure to stand in my place today and add my voice to the debate on Bill 44, An Act to implement the Northern Ontario energy credit, 2010—rather interesting to me for a variety of reasons, not least of which is: I don't have very much to do with the north. I represent a southern riding, Thornhill, but a riding nonetheless full of people who are on fixed incomes and who have an interest in all things financial, all things fiscal in province of Ontario, and notably the idea that there's a differentiation between north and south.

Originally, I can tell you that I sat at home last night with my reading file and took a look at the bill itself and then took a look at a summary of the bill. My original gut feel was: I don't want to vote for this bill. Then I put the gut feel away and thought with my heart and said, "Yes, you have to vote for this bill."

Mr. Bruce Crozier: You have a heart?

Mr. Peter Shurman: It may be I do have a heart, in response to my friend from the other side.

My constituents are being hit just as hard as anyone else in the province in terms of the cost of energy and the cost of everything else as well. They have something to say about this, which is why I want to participate in the debate. Aside from that, I asked myself: Why would you want to index—and I'll get to this in greater detail—what you're going to refund to people, given the fact that the very income tax system indexes everybody? In other words, we're going to take after-tax money from people who have already paid graduated tax and we're going to graduate the scale again in terms of what we give back to them. That strikes me as more than just a little strange.

In fact, the bill itself is somewhat strange in a number of senses. The amounts that are envisioned for refund are strange: up to \$130 in the case of a single person, while a family, including single parents, would be eligible for up to \$200—a wide range of interpretation. Then there's a really interesting aspect to this bill, and that is the fact that it is not controlled by regulation. This is uncharacteristic of this government, which seems to like to pass legislation, all of which we really find out about later on in the piece when the regulations come out. I cite, for example, something like the pesticide bill, whereas here we're fixing the refunds in time. So if you're dealing with a single for up to \$130 or if you're dealing with a family for up to \$200, you're talking about fixing that in time so that, absent any amendment to this legislation in the fullness of whatever time we're discussing, or absent a repeal of this bill and its substitution by another bill, those are the amounts we're going to see there this year and next year and the year after and five years out, regardless of what happens to the money supply and inflation that may affect it.

1650

We're dealing with that strange circumstance. We're dealing with the fact that these amounts are a pittance in the first place when you consider a variety of factors that affect energy. I cite by way of example a number of things: a 12% increase just announced by the provincial energy authority; a \$53-million tax grab to pay for the Green Energy Act; the HST. If you start to add that up and you take a look at a family's energy bill up north or anywhere else—let's take a really small energy bill. Let's take \$100 a month and add approximately 20%—it's actually more than that. You're now paying \$120 a month. If you take that \$20 and you extrapolate over a year, you've got a \$240 increase. And you're going to do what? Depending on income, you might refund up to \$200 of that. So no matter how you slice it, no matter where you live and regardless of this bill, families and single people—everybody in this province who pays for energy, and that, let's face it, is everybody in this province—is going to pay more. That's the cold, hard fact. So it's Dalton giveth and Dalton taketh away from the standpoint of anybody who is on the giving or the receiving end.

The fact that we have all of those things makes it rather strange. The fact that it applies only to the north is strange as well. You could say, "Well, this is a disadvantaged area in the sense that it's colder at certain times of the year." Tell that to my people in Thornhill. Tell that to people anywhere in the province. I don't notice that much of a disparity in temperature as to be able to say that energy costs in Thornhill are appreciably cheaper than energy costs up in Timmins, for example.

The red tape that comes into this bill is equally frustrating and equally strange. When you get into the application, which is required to have your rebate, your refund come to you, you're going to get it by way of four cheques over the course of the first year, if and when you make application. After that, it becomes part of your income tax. Just the administration of that has got to cost more than the individual refunds themselves amount to. So when we're told that the total amount being expended on a per annum basis for this program will be about \$35 million, I wonder whether that \$35 million includes the administrative costs. I rather have to doubt that.

This is a bill, then, that, on the basis of what it purports to do in terms of addressing what we as individuals and as families pay, adds insult to injury. "I'm going to tax you four times over over a very short period of time, new taxes ranging from the new energy tax to the \$53-million imposition for green energy to the HST, and then I'm going to give you back a very small fraction of that and tell you what a good guy I am, and I'm the government of Ontario": That's what we're being told to believe.

The bottom line on this and what makes it really strange is that it's a bill out there, hanging all by itself, and not part of any perceptible energy policy on the part of the government of the day. I don't see an energy policy; people in general don't see an energy policy.

What exactly is this? It's not about atomic energy, it's not about wind, it's not about biomass, it's not about hydro, it's not about coal and it's not about Energizer batteries. What this bill is about is entirely throwing a bone to the north, saying to the north, which has been injured repeatedly on the mining front and in the forestry sector, "We care about you. We, the government of Ontario, care about you, and look what we're going to do for you: We're going to recognize you as an area that's different from the rest of the province and we're going to give you this little bone to appease you." That's the bottom line. That's the way we interpret the bill.

Having said that, as I began, I have to reiterate that I and my caucus will be voting for the bill, because far be it for us to take away this bone that's being thrown to people in the north. I hope those of you watching and those of you who read reports on this debate in the north understand that we—and I think I can say all of us—care about the north, care about all parts of the province, but don't see this as anything more than a sop to keep you off the backs of the government and not recognizing you as an individual and special sector. And it's not; it's just plain not.

The annual credit would be available to northern residents age 18 or older who pay rent or property tax for their principal residence. A single person is eligible for up to \$130—I say again: up to \$130; a family up to \$200. How is that done? The credit would be reduced for a single person with adjusted net income over \$35,000 and eliminated when income exceeds \$48,000. It would be reduced for families with adjusted family net income over \$45,000 and eliminated when income exceeds \$65,000. Really, this comes down to the ability to pay. I ask the question again, did the income tax that these families and these individuals pay not already address that? I say to you that indeed it has.

It is curious to me where the impetus behind the bill came from and who it was really designed to benefit. The income cut-off levels, as I've suggested, appear rather arbitrary. No one has bothered to explain why those are the particular levels that have been selected. All those on fixed incomes across the province will be hit particularly hard by the coming HST. Indeed, as we found out very recently, they're already being hit by it and the increases in hydro rates.

Think about it. I don't care how hard-hearted you are, you've got to understand that persons on a fixed income, and very particularly seniors, have to absorb the following: a 12% increase from the provincial energy authority that kicked in this very week—12%. I've already done some math for you. There's \$53 million in a tax grab that's designed to pay for the Green Energy Act. There's that. There is the issue of smart meters—and I'll address those in a minute—which are coming to my riding with an increase in rates by as much as 52%. And there's the HST.

It is literally, from an energy perspective, coming at people from all sides. It doesn't matter where they look, there's somebody piling on, and the somebody always

seems to be connected in layers to this government. The numbers are unfathomable and they're unabsorbable. It doesn't matter whether you come from the north, the south, the east or the west. This is Ontario; it's applying everywhere to ordinary people.

I heard from a resident in my riding last week in an email dated April 26. I'll leave his name out of it, but he could be anybody. He is anybody. "I had written to the Premier," he writes, "last July expressing my concern about the various increases coming together for the cost of electricity. As yet I don't have a smart meter but my best guess is that it will add 20% as we are in our mid-70s and not inclined to get up at 2 a.m. to do the laundry or dishes and also not inclined to buy new clothes- and dishwashers with delayed start-up timers when our current appliances work just fine. The point of this note is to advise that today PowerStream sent us a letter increasing the monthly instalment from \$194 (which they set themselves from historic data) to \$378 per month for the next six months." Let me say that again: \$194 to \$378 for a couple on fixed incomes above 70 years old for the next six months. "Upon calling I found some was catch-up but a significant portion was the inclusion of the HST and the 12.9% rate increase. I suppose part of this is helping fund the Premier's green agenda. I still don't understand how he will keep the Ohio/Pennsylvania power plant emissions at the border once his new plants are in place. Anyway, just thought you'd like to know I did send him a second letter on this issue but don't expect a response. Retired seniors are not important." That's his conclusion.

1700

And do you know what? He's right. Retired seniors are not important. They can't be important or you wouldn't be piling on. I just enumerated four different levels of taxation or charge or fee or levy, call it what you will, but at the end of the day underneath all of this is the Ontario government, and these are all coming into play within a period I could say of months but really it's weeks, over the course of 12 weeks from now until July 1, four different levels, and people just like that constituent who wrote to me are saying, "Hey, when is enough enough?" I say to you, I have a sneaking suspicion it may be somewhere around October 2011.

To continue, the gentleman's monthly instalment, as we have seen, is almost doubling. This is almost a 100% increase, and that's now—that's now. More to come. This is not an estimate that came from him. This is an estimate that came from his local utility, the folks he has no choice but to buy power from unless he somehow builds his own. Far, far, far away for somebody to be able to do that in a two-story home in Thornhill. That estimate is only for the next six months, as I said. The question then becomes, who knows what happens? Is the sky the limit? This government has decided that its energy policy, if you can even discern a coherent energy policy, rests, for example, largely in Korea. We don't know what the effect of that is going to be. We don't know what the effect of renewable energy, as it integrates

under a feed-in tariff system with this province's grid, is going to mean ultimately.

I sat in this Legislature along with my colleagues from all sides of this House during the introduction and the debate of the Green Energy Act and remember very well the almost infinitesimal amount that the then energy and infrastructure minister said would be the ultimate result of his Green Energy Act, and we have far—and we're talking orders of magnitude here—surpassed that at this point in time. So is it believable that we can see a point where we can stop time and ascertain what our energy bills are going to be? Can we tell our seniors that there's going to be a point where they can stop absorbing increases that they can't really afford? The answer obviously at this point is, no, it's not.

The tax package that the government likes to talk about when talking about how the HST will be revenue-neutral is not going to offset, even if you believed that it were revenue-neutral, the 100% increase being absorbed in this man's energy costs, let alone the 8% increase he and other seniors will pay on hundreds of other items starting July 1. The concept that the HST is going to be revenue-neutral is laughable. I was assigned by my party to cover Premier McGuinty's media availability this morning, and I thought we would be hearing questions about, oh, perhaps the raids that were conducted overnight on crime. The questions were almost exclusively—and this is coming from the media, and what is the media if not market-driven?—about the HST. People are beginning to feel the effects as they buy in advance, pay in advance for things that will be delivered after July. So they're noticing, and as we move closer to July 1 they're going to notice more.

In the energy bill that was cited in the email that I just read, the HST was coming into play. I predict for the members on the other side that if you think you've escaped the wrath of the people of Ontario for what you're imposing on them by way of the HST, and if you think you really can sell the concept of revenue-neutrality, you've got another think coming; and if you think that it's getting bad now, the heat in the kitchen is going to become intense as we near July 1, as we get to July 1, and it's not going to go away any time soon. I can promise every single one of you that we will take it to the doors at election time, that we will continue to push this very hard, very hard, and we'll marry it, as we have today, courtesy of you, to every single other one of these impositions that you're putting on us.

Interjections.

Mr. Peter Shurman: I guess we've got them going now, Speaker. In any event, it's interesting that the rebate amount is actually set in this legislation, I've said before, and would have to be repealed or amended in a world where you can impose a new tax or levy literally every single week—and you have; you have for the past four weeks approximately. This is extremely odd for a government that loves to regulate. It means that the rebate amount cannot be adjusted even to the cost of living without new legislation. So I'd love to hear from one of

the members who's going to comment whether the anticipation is that we're going to get—what is it called?—An Act to implement the Northern Ontario energy credit, 2011, next year. Perhaps we will.

It demonstrates that this government is not serious about providing tax relief to anyone. So you can stand the revenue minister up here every single day in question period, and he can go on and on about what a revelation it is and what a new day it is in an open Ontario for a quid pro quo type of arrangement, where we have a tax rebate that will more than adequately cover the out-of-pocket costs of the HST. But the fact of the matter is, our party doesn't believe it, the people of Ontario don't believe it, and it's going to become reality on July 1. People who may have their doubts, including the folks on the other side, are going to find out, if you're not already through the emails and the letters and the very people stopping you in the street to ask you and comment about it as you go about your ridings.

This bill would not be coming forward if the combination of the HST and the soaring hydro rates weren't already going to hammer northerners and all Ontarians like a wrecking ball on a building. And while I will vote for this bill because any relief is some relief, it is way too little and it is way too late.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Mr. Peter Kormos: It was a pleasure to listen to the member from Thornhill, who elicited some response from the government backbenches.

Mr. John Yakabuski: He woke them up.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Mr. Yakabuski says they woke up; others might say they came to. In any event, they were incredibly responsive. At one point, Mr. Yakabuski, listening to the howls of pain, hollered out, "Nurse, bring some novocaine. I think we're hitting a nerve."

Mr. Shurman's analysis is a particularly interesting one. Increasingly, as I read the bill and hear the comments on it, this isn't a bit of public policy. This is an election campaign.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Absolutely. It's pure politics.

Mr. Peter Kormos: You say "pure politics," Mr. Yakabuski. If it were pure politics, I could live with it. It's cynical politics. This is vote-buying politics. This is pork-barrel politics, updated to 2010—no, more importantly, 2011.

When I reflect on the fact that northerners have a tough row to hoe, I also understand that everybody in Ontario has a tough row to hoe, and while I don't begrudge northerners one penny of additional support for their devastated lifestyles, I've got to say that I've got folks down where I come from who are going to say, "Hey, hey, what about me?" I've got folks down where I come from who can't afford the electricity bills that they're suffering now. If we face another cold winter, their bills are going to compound and double and Lord knows how much further, even possibly triple.

This government is engaged in the most cynical of ploys. I don't think folks in the north are going to buy it.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I want to respond, if I can, to the remarks by the member from Thornhill. Indeed, I am very pleased that he has publicly said that he will be supporting this legislation. Certainly I can tell him that this is legislation that is indeed very welcome in northern Ontario. As I mentioned earlier yesterday, Minister Duncan was actually in Thunder Bay speaking to people about this issue and was very warmly received.

I think it's also important to point out that this is one very small part, but a very significant part, of a budget that focused very, very strongly on northern Ontario needs and economic needs. We're looking at a budget that brought forward support for an industrial energy rate, which again was extremely well received in northern Ontario; highway construction dollars for northern highways are at a record level—\$773 million, up from \$648 million last year—again, a reflection of the need for infrastructure improvements in northern Ontario; \$45 million for a skills development program related to the Ring of Fire.

1710

There are many other aspects, but one that's really important to everybody in northern Ontario—and that isn't just speaking on behalf of our northern Ontario government caucus members, but all northern Ontario caucus members—is the northern Ontario heritage fund, a fund that was \$60 million three years ago. We made a commitment as a government to bring it up to \$100 million within four years. Over the last three years, it has gone from \$60 million to \$70 million to \$80 million, and this year to \$90 million. We're extremely grateful. This is an economic development fund that has created or retained 12,000 jobs in northern Ontario—an extremely important economic development fund. We have a commitment to raise it to \$100 million next year.

For all northerners, there's a recognition that the McGuinty government understands the challenges we're facing in northern Ontario, and our March 25 budget certainly strongly reflects that.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: I did listen attentively and respectfully to the member from Thornhill. He's an expert in communication. He has certainly got this right, in my view.

He outlined—and he said in conclusion there's so little being done—that he was supporting it while at the same time pointing out that the hypocrisy of it really runs deep in this bill.

The genesis of this particular bill was actually in the budget. I'm holding up Premier McGuinty's document here. It's on page 8 and it says here, "The 2010 budget also announces our intention to create a three-year industrial electricity program," as well as electrical rebates for northern Ontario.

The hypocrisy is that it should have been in Bill 16. Here we are, spending debate time and all that stuff on

something that should have been in the budget. It was in the budget, and it's out here now to sort of separate it from—

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: The point, really, is this: Why are you making such an issue out of something that's so little? What it does is it addresses something that's very important. This is the real truth of it all: It's an announcement that their energy policy is a complete failure. That's what it is; Madame Speaker, you know this yourself. In all sincerity, this is an admission that their energy policy has failed northern Ontario.

Look at the pulp and paper industry; look at the mining industry. There are boards on all the businesses in the northern part of this province, and it's your policies that have failed them.

Some members have said that we did nothing. We retooled the Pickering nuclear plant. It shows how little you know. We also retooled the Bruce plant on energy. We closed the only coal plant in this province. That was closed in 2003 by Elizabeth Witmer. This minister is an embarrassment to me and my riding, which champions energy. I can't believe a thing they say.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I'm pleased to have just a minute or so to respond to the speech given by the member from Thornhill.

Although he says he's not from the north, there are those who believe that north of Steeles is the true north. From that context, he would be from the north in that sense.

Just a couple of things: Clearly, this is an acknowledgement or a recognition of special circumstances that exist in parts of the province. The north is a special part of the province in that regard. It has its own particular challenges when it comes to business and industry, climate and geography, and this is one way of acknowledging that.

As a simple comparator, my vehicle registration, I think, is \$74 or \$80 a year. I think we still have a differential vehicle registration for northern Ontario. That's a clear recognition of the distinction within northern Ontario because of vast distances, costs and weather that occur and opportunities for employment. This is part of that acknowledgement and broad recognition here in the province of Ontario.

I need to speak, in the few seconds, about the member from Thornhill and the email he referenced from—I believe he said a senior, but it really doesn't matter—and this huge, huge increase that PowerStream is proposing. I presume it's the equalized billing that they're putting in place.

A few years ago, my family grew from my wife and I when some of our children decided they wanted to come home; we invited them and they brought more with them. I watched my hydro rate go from a very modest amount to a very high amount. Veridian, in our community, bumped up my monthly billing average because they saw

my consumption going up. Now it has dropped way back down again.

I can't imagine—and I'm not going to dispute what he's saying or that individual—that PowerStream has increased their monthly payment—I presume it's their equalized billing—by 100% in any way, based on anything that's happening with policy in Ontario. That's an absurd conclusion—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member for Thornhill has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Thank you to the member from Welland, the Minister of Northern Development, my friend from Durham and, notwithstanding that last comment, my friend from Pickering–Scarborough East.

I want to reiterate a couple of points that I made in debate, but I'd also like to read into the record the comments of the Minister of Finance when he introduced this bill. He said:

"I am pleased to rise today to introduce the Lowering Energy Costs for Northern Ontarians Act. This was a key proposal presented in our 2010 budget. The McGuinty government's five-year plan to open Ontario to more jobs and economic growth was laid out in our recent speech from the throne. Our 2010 budget moves that plan forward in a fair and balanced way. Our plan supports job creation and enhances programs and services that Ontarians value, including education, health care and skills training," and so forth.

The point in reading this into the record is to say that this is an example of a government that has become so arrogant that the finance minister can rise, as do many of his colleagues with increasing regularity, and take credit for doing something that they want the credit for without saying that there is a quid pro quo; that for anything you get, you're going to pay, and by the way, you're not going to pay double, you're not going to pay triple, you're probably going to pay quadruple or more for the privilege of getting whatever it is you've got.

The fact of the matter is that there is something duplicitous about all of this. The concept of giving people money back by way of a refund because they happen to live in the north and are somehow or other disadvantaged as to energy but it can't be given uniformly across the province, the fact that all kinds of northern MPPs are standing and taking credit for a variety of things that have nothing to do with energy, bothers me more than a little bit. This bill is not fair on a variety of levels, and that's for the record.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Kormos: It's a pleasure to speak to this bill on behalf of the NDP caucus. Howard Hampton addressed it at length yesterday, as a matter of fact—Howard Hampton from Kenora–Rainy River, a northerner if there ever was one. Gilles Bisson spoke to it yesterday and then again today, yet another northerner.

You've got to recall, when I was a kid growing up down in Crowland, as a matter of fact, which is now part

of Welland, in a working-class family, there was the occasional neighbour kid who used to talk in the summertime about going up north with his family. We were horribly envious of them because we didn't go on vacations. Once in a while we'd go to Nickel Beach down by the nickel plant in Port Colborne and sort of wade through the oil slick and pretend we were swimming. So I was envious of these friends who went up north.

It really took a number of years till I finally went up north. It was somewhere south of Huntsville and it was one of those cottage arrangements where the cottages are side by side. If you reached out your window you could touch the side of the other cottage and you could hear the most intimate grooming behaviour of your neighbour cottagers in the morning.

I realized, first of all, I wasn't very far north and, secondly, it wasn't very romantic. It wasn't till quite a bit later in my life that I truly—during the course of my teens I got up to Sudbury and North Bay and places like that, and Manitoulin Island, as a matter of fact. I can't remember the name of the hotel but when you're driving south from Elliot Lake on Highway 6—Highway 6 is a great historic highway. Highway 6 goes from Port Dover, which is Toby Barrett's riding and the home of the Erie Beach Hotel and the finest perch in the world, unless you're from Penetanguishene, in which case that's the finest perch in the world.

So you start at Highway 6 down in Port Dover and you can drive all the way—well, you've got to take the ferry over to Manitoulin. We were coming south from Elliot Lake.

1720

Mr. Michael A. Brown: Espanola.

Mr. Peter Kormos: That's right, Espanola. We'd been driving a good stretch of time, and we were looking for a hotel to stay—not to drink, to stay. It was late at night. We were really tired, bleary-eyed, just couldn't think of driving any more. We found a hotel. We asked the bartender if they rented rooms. He said, "We do," and we said, "Okay, we'd like to rent a couple." He said, "Well, you can." It had been a long time since that hotel had been frequented by tourists. It was one of the more interesting and novel nights of my life.

Every tavern in every part of the world has the same smell of spilled beer and other things, and that quaint hotel—

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: —in Espanola, Mr. Brown says—

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: It was right where you pick up the ferry.

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: There you go. I haven't been back there. Maybe some day I will.

What's interesting, you see, is that the member for Nipissing talked—and of course she's entitled to call herself from the north, but to be fair, North Bay is a far

cry from, oh, Timmins, or when you want to really get up north, you get up into Howard Hampton's and Gilles Bisson's north and you go up to places like I have with Bisson, places like Peawanuck or Attawapiskat, those very remote native communities—a totally different world.

Again, the incredible burden that northerners carry—and they carry it with grace, quite frankly, and great courage. There was a time when the north was prosperous, a time when the lumber mills milled lumber, when the pulp mills made pulp, when the mines were producing ore and when the paper mills made paper. In a lot of those small towns—of course, the other time that people travel through northern Ontario is when they're on the TransCanada Highway headed out through Winnipeg to western Canada, and you visit many of those towns. Those are one-industry towns. I've had the luxury of going to them, being in them, spending time in them, meeting people in them, talking to people in them, from time to time being on the occasional picket line in those towns, but they're one-industry towns. When that mill shuts down, even the Tim Hortons doesn't stay open, if they had a Tim Hortons to begin with.

I don't think most of us from down here in southern Ontario really have any idea of how thoroughly the north has been devastated by the loss of mills and the undermining of the economy. Howard Hampton has spoken often about the need for fair, predictable, affordable electricity rates. There isn't a single member of this Legislature who's more familiar with the production and pricing of electricity than Howard Hampton. He is undoubtedly the expert. He's the author of the book.

For the life of me, I don't understand how this Bill 44—and you heard me refer to it earlier. This isn't public policy. This is an election campaign. This is pretty thin gruel and it's pretty sad if this is all this government has to offer northern Ontarians—or, for that matter, southern Ontarians—because they offer northern Ontarians a pittance, a maximum benefit that starts to reduce once you make \$45,000 for a family, a maximum benefit that starts to get—who said "sliced and diced" earlier today? It starts to get sliced and diced the minute you start reaching \$45,000. You know, \$45,000, when you're living in northern Ontario, doesn't go very far; \$45,000 when you've got to pay the gasoline prices that northern Ontarians pay for gasoline; \$45,000 a year when you've got to send two, three or four kids to school and get them clothed in winter clothing.

Again, it's been noted earlier, driving—there are no subways. I'm not talking about the sandwich shop; I'm talking about public transit. There are no subways or streetcars in Timmins. I'm not trying to pretend I have lived the northern experience, but I've been there often enough and talked to enough northerners to have a pretty good feel. If you live in a remote community in the north, it's not unusual to drive a couple of hours to get groceries. Heck, in Toronto, you walk to the grocery store. There's a Sobeys on every block—not every block; I'm being hyperbolic. But you walk to the supermarket. In

northern Ontario, as often as not, you drive an hour or two hours. So driving isn't an option.

And of course, the climate itself: northern Ontario is—well, this chamber is pretty cold right now. I made a reference once to brass monkeys and balls. I remember the Speaker got all twisted; it was young Mr. Arnott. He jumped to his feet because I identified the weather outside. I had to explain to him that the phrase had nothing to do with the gonads of apes or chimpanzees. The brass monkey on a sailing ship was the brass plate beside the cannon upon which the cannon balls were mounted in that pyramid, because you had wood planking. So heavy cannonballs—I guess it has something very much to do with balls—they were made of iron, I trust, but not made of brass. You wouldn't make a cannonball out of brass—brass is a softer material. The brass plate was there to mount the cannonballs on. And when it got cold, because of the different reaction of these materials to cold—one contracts and expands at a faster rate than the other—the brass plate would expand or contract in the case of getting cold, and the cannonballs would roll off the brass plate because of the contraction of the brass plate. Hence the phrase, it's cold enough—and the brass plate, course, is what's called a monkey. Hence the phrase—

Mr. Frank Klees: I would caution him, Speaker.

Mr. Peter Kormos: No, it's on record. I've told this story before. But there have been new members elected, and I thought they might want to see how it is that we can sometimes take the long way to get to our destination because it's the more colourful way. Hence the phrase, "It's cold enough to freeze the balls off a brass monkey." I say it has nothing to do with chimpanzees, apes, gorillas or other furry beasts.

It's cold up north, and the reality is that natural gas isn't piped the way it is down here in southern Ontario. That means that a whole lot of heating is done with electricity. Even if it isn't done with electricity—let's say it's done with propane and a forced air furnace. You know, Speaker, because Howard Hampton told us so a million times, if none, that two of the biggest electricity consumers in your house are your refrigerator and the motor on your furnace. So northerners, right off the bat—I mean, the mere fact of it being colder, and if you're using electric heat, that speaks for itself; but if you're using a forced air furnace, again, the furnace motor alone.

But I'm hard pressed, and I know that people will get these cheques—and again, it's not always what it appears to be, because it says \$200 but it's not really \$200 because once you start making more than \$45,000 as a family it starts declining until you make \$65,000, and then it's zip, nada, nothing, zero, the big doughnut hole. You don't get a cent.

1730

I picked up a used book called *The Myth of Parliament* by Roman March at a used bookstore the other day. Mr. O'Toole saw me reading it and he remarked—I wasn't aware—that it was a text. That's how these guys

sell their books, the professors who write these books; they make them compulsory texts in their courses.

It's an interesting book, as most of these books are. There was an interview with backbenchers—and mind you he's focusing on the federal level, and Lord knows it could be entirely different here. But the question was in a survey, in research, asking whether Parliament offered enough opportunities, through ministerial contacts, caucus, committees, etc., for backbenchers to exercise their influence on front-bench policy. Here are some of the responses. This is in Roman March's book, *The Myth of Parliament*, Prentice-Hall, and his footnote for it is the *Globe and Mail Magazine*, May 2, 1964. Here's one of the responses: "Opportunities to influence"—this is from government backbenchers—"the front bench now exist, though many ministers are not influenced by the view of backbenchers until they become rebellious." I'm familiar with that. I can confirm that. Rebellion has—there's some value in it and some payback of many types.

Another backbencher responded—because, of course, one of the concerns of March in this work, insofar as I can tell—he talks about the myth of Parliament, about who really wields power, whether elected people yield power. Another comment from a backbencher was, "It's not a question of enough opportunities. Backbenchers will never be a decisive factor in the parliamentary system."

Yet a third one, one that I'm well aware of after as many years here as I've been—not as long as Norm Sterling, but then again, who wants to?

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Or Jim Bradley, my dear friend whose riding—as a matter of fact, we share the city of St. Catharines. I get the smaller portion, he gets the bigger portion, but we share representing St. Catharines.

Here's another comment from a backbencher: "Most of the time, front-bench policy is already decided before a backbencher has a chance to exert influence."

Those are three very remarkable observations. Now, mind you, some who want to dispute this would point out that that book was written in 1974. I'd suggest that the experience of folks over the last 20 or 30 years is that those comments are not only true today but they're truer because, of course, as we know, one Mr. Trudeau—you might remember him—the Canadian Prime Minister referred to backbenchers, and he said—correct me if somebody here knows the exact quote, if somebody has memorized it or written it on it their palm like Sarah Palin. But Trudeau said that once a backbencher is 15 minutes away from Parliament Hill, he's a nobody. What these poor folks were saying when they were interviewed for this *Globe and Mail Magazine* article is that even when they are in Parliament, they're nobody. There just aren't the opportunities to affect public policy.

The observation has been raised as well: What about the family that lives one mile south of that boundary, one mile south of the North Bay boundary that Ms. Smith represents, my dear friend the government House leader? They don't get a cheque, but their neighbour one kilo-

metre to the north does. Why? Did all of a sudden they enjoy all the benefits of southern Ontario, if indeed there are any, in this climate, in this economic climate that Mr. McGuinty has created for working families across Ontario? This is so phony; this is so artificial; this is so catering, in the most cynical way, in a way that I don't think northerners are going to buy. They're going to cash the cheques, and they're going to say, "Okay"—I mean, I can hear a guy telling his wife, "Okay, dear. We've got the cheque. Whoop-de-do. What now? Oh, the electricity bill is how much this month?" That cheque doesn't even cover one month's electricity bill. You know what your electricity bills were, you folks from southern Ontario, last winter. That's for those of you who might live in modest houses, like I do, never mind those of you who might live in big 5,000-square-foot houses.

Then the other issue is, somehow this bill suggests that northerners have issues around electricity costs, and they do. What about the folks where I come from? What do you think, we just run an extension cord to Niagara Falls, plug it in, and the electricity is free? Come on, now. What this bill does is ignore the crisis around utility costs that's confronting every household, every family, every senior, every retiree, every young family. Young families—jeez, young families: two or three kids, trying to do their best, playing by the rules, getting hammered every step of the way. This bill insults them. One, because it's not much of a subsidy, is it? There's not much compensation here for this government's malfeasance when it comes to handling the electrical energy file. The fact that it's northern—they're trying to paint it, they're trying to spin it, they're trying to frame it as if somehow this is one of their northern policies. They're trying to throw a lifeline to people like the member for Thunder Bay—Atikokan, although for the life of me I don't know how or why he should think that this is going to save him, come next provincial election.

What do you say to the rest of the people? What does Dalton McGuinty say to the rest of the people of Ontario? They don't suffer the burden of outrageous electricity prices, along with outrageous natural gas prices, along with job losses after job losses? I heard Mr. McGuinty this morning in his morning scrum, saying, "Oh, I see we've lost 250,000, maybe 260,000, maybe 275,000 jobs." All of a sudden, he wasn't saying that there's been no net job loss.

Very peculiar stuff. I may have a chance to speak for two more minutes after people do questions and comments, if you're so inclined.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I always appreciate the conversation from my friend the member for Welland, and particularly as he recounts his adventures in parts of northern Ontario and in particular in the fine riding of Algoma-Manitoulin, as it stretches—a very small part of it—from Espanola through to South Baymouth.

I was particularly interested in his explanation of a certain saying. I was in the Chair one time when he

explained to me the merits of "tinker's damn." I'm hoping that in his response, he gets around to explaining that one, Madam Speaker—which by the way, is in order.

I just want to point out that this bill is about providing relief to northern folks for energy costs—not necessarily electricity, perhaps propane. It could be heating oil; it could be gasoline for their car; it could be firewood. It could be what the person chooses to use that money for. There are many options, but there is no debate that the weather is colder. There is no debate that our heating season is longer. There is no debate that many of the communities I represent don't have the opportunity for perhaps a natural gas situation, which often is much less expensive. Those are unique challenges to living in northern Ontario. I think this is what this bill does: It recognizes that, as it does with vehicle licences, as it does with the northern Ontario heritage fund, as it does with all of those things that use exactly the same borders we're talking about here.

1740

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm pleased to provide a few comments in response to the very, very eloquent speech that the member for Welland made in his comments.

As I'm sure a number of members in this House remember, many years ago I was a mayor at the age of 22. I got elected at 22, and I remember going to my first Association of Municipalities of Ontario conference. I sat at a big round table on the floor of the Royal York, and I remember talking to my council at the time—at that time they were called "aldermen." There were both men and women on my council at the time, and I remember asking them some advice about what to do at AMO when resolutions came forward. The one thing they told me—and they were very specific about this. They said that when you're at AMO, you have to support those northern road resolutions. When those resolutions come up for northern Ontario, you have to support them because they have it tough up there. So with all due respect to the member for Algoma-Manitoulin, the member for Thornhill talked about the support for the north on this bill and the fact that many are supporting this bill.

However, the one quote that I want to again reiterate—and I'm not going to talk about brass monkeys or any of the other wonderful things the member for Welland spoke about. But I'm going to use one of the quotes that he made, because I think, coming from eastern Ontario, it's very appropriate. The quote I want to make is, "What about the folks from where I come from?" I think that was an excellent quote from the member for Welland, because this issue is all through Ontario. It's every household; it's every family. People are, using the word the member for Welland used, getting "hammered" by the energy policies of this government. I think that's the issue we need to also put on the floor today.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It's a pleasure to join this debate, although I'm not a member from the north, but I am from eastern Ontario. Like the previous speaker, I want to focus on some of the questions that the member from Welland and, actually, the member from Thornhill suggested.

The question that was posed to me as well was, "What about eastern Ontario"—the area that I represent—"versus the north?" It's not very difficult to explain that, yes, we do have some challenges in different parts of Ontario, but the north faces some extraordinary challenges.

When you hear about the member from Welland and his travels in the north, I just wonder if he ever noticed those signs where the price of gasoline sometimes was 20%, 25% higher than it is in southern Ontario, whether or not it's rural. And it's for real, as my colleague from the north just mentioned, about the longer seasons.

What we're trying to do here is equal the playing field a little bit. Yes, we can always use more in other parts of the province. There's no question about that: We always need more. I get demands every day from my riding about things that are really needed, but I think what's important here is that we're trying to be fair. There are some extra challenges. Their construction season is a lot shorter than it is here, so things are compressed and it normally costs more.

To be selfish, to just think of my part of the province—yes, there are times when we have to do that, absolutely, because those are the people who send us here. But I think we need to be fair and wear the provincial hat to recognize those challenges that we're facing in other parts of the province. I think we need to do that.

So I urge members on all sides of this House to support this. Let's get on with it.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

Mr. John O'Toole: The member from Welland is well-known for his insightful comments, and I came in specifically because he was quick to point out the injustice of some parts of the bill.

Even my good friend from Leeds–Grenville was also saying, "What about my area?" It isn't really about that. The broader issue is the issue of fairness. What you think you are doing as government—as government gives away, it implies that they take away. That's the inequity that you don't seem to understand. You have no money. All the government does is move the money around on the top of the Titanic that you're on.

Here's the point. It's a deck chair issue. If he's giving someone something, he's taking it from someone else. They seem to think that they have largesse or some privilege of position here to direct and redirect. What I see in my riding are people, the senior citizens—and I'll be speaking later tonight. I'm cautioning the viewer that I will get into very specific cases and it will take a considerable amount of time to make my point.

But the real issue here is one of fairness. I think it has been made over and over again, but it demonstrates one

thing here. They have a failed policy on energy. It affects northern Ontario, arguably, worse than anywhere else, with the possible exception of Hamilton, which has been devastated by their policies.

It's a foolhardy government that thinks they can solve the problems at the expense of another portion of the population. It's simply unfair and could arguably be undemocratic.

I know what they're trying to do. They're trying to have it both ways, but that's typical of this government, trying to have it both ways—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you very much. Any further comments or questions? The member from Welland has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Peter Kormos: The government member says that this is relief. I suppose so. I'm inclined to agree, though, with Frank Klees, when he says, "You really want to provide some relief for folks up north? Then cancel your stupid HST and give every family another \$800 back into their pockets that you're going to take from them as a result of this tax hike."

If you want to provide some relief for the north, then pass Gilles Bisson's legislation, the bill he moved and had second reading on last Thursday, which would give a better crack at making sure that we process some of the ore that's being mined here in Ontario—that we process it here in Ontario, too.

If you want to provide some relief for the north, then get some of those paper mills back up and running and get some of those one-industry towns some life support that they've been waiting for.

You want to give some relief? Then focus a little more on the reindustrialization of this province rather than abandoning that value-added manufacturing factor or facet of our economy, the true wealth-creation part of our economy.

You want to provide some relief? Then don't claw back the child benefit from families that are the lowest-income families.

You want to provide some relief? Part of me wants to say: Then just resign now and let people who are more capable of doing it perform the role.

The government misses the boat. They think that this—oh, man, they're going to have cheques in the mail. We went through that once before. I recall it very distinctively. It didn't cut it then; it's not going to cut it now.

This isn't relief; this is a slap in the face.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I represent one of the larger constituencies, actually the third-largest constituency in Ontario. It is roughly the size of all of southern Ontario. The 86,000 square kilometres of Algoma–Manitoulin stretch from a small but wonderful place called Killarney on the east side of Georgian Bay, where you will find the finest fish and chips in the world at Bert Herbert's fish bus. If you read the Air Canada magazine of a couple of months ago, they point out that that last statement of mine is absolutely true.

The constituency goes all the way across the North Shore of Lake Huron, including the largest island in fresh water in the world, Manitoulin, and the fine island of St. Joseph Island just off the west end of Manitoulin. The people of St. Joseph Island are famous for maple syrup and other things. The total North Shore stretches from Nairn Centre, where there's a sawmill that has recently been sold and hopefully gets back into full production shortly; the fine paper town of Espanola, which has been producing fine papers for the world for at least a couple of generations lately with the absence of a few years during the Second World War and I guess in the 1930s—before that, they were also doing that; and the fine uranium town of Elliot Lake.

1750

I just want to talk about that for a few minutes. Elliot Lake went from being a city that had 4,000 uranium miners actively working in the uranium mines when I was elected back in 1987—this is about energy. My friends in the New Democratic Party promised that they would maintain those contracts from the uranium mines in Elliot Lake and that all the uranium used in Ontario's nuclear reactors would come from Elliot Lake. Then, within six months of taking office they announced they were closing the mines of Elliot Lake.

Interjection: They closed it. Peter Kormos was in cabinet then.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: They closed it. The good news is, however, that this fine municipality refused to die. It reinvented itself as one of the retirement communities in Ontario, probably the best-known of retirement communities in Ontario. It is now a very proud city, supporting 11,000 or 12,000 people who are mostly retirees.

Why I'm talking about these folks is because they are particularly sensitive to energy prices. My office in Elliot Lake deals with electricity issues on a daily basis, if not an hourly basis. We try to assist my constituents in sorting out hydro bills. They have huge problems with energy retailers. We haven't talked about those folks who are a problem, I think, across the province. We've taken action in this House to try to rein some of their more adventurous practices in, which have preyed upon particularly seniors. We're looking forward to hopefully getting the number of phone calls to my office about the practices reduced.

What this bill does—it's important to those folks in Bruce Mines. Lars Moffatt is the page from Bruce Mines; I should recognize him. What this does is provide northern families who reside or rent in northern Ontario with a \$200 cheque to assist them with their energy costs, and \$130 for individuals. People say, "Well, you know, that's nothing." I guess for people from the south, a hundred bucks isn't worth much, but we in northern Ontario think it is worth something. So \$130 for a single person that I think goes until—I should look at my note here—the credit goes for people up to \$35,000 for a single person and is eliminated when their income becomes \$48,000. I think that's a reasonable sum. It is helpful to these folks.

It helps them in addition to their licence plates, which people would know they pay half as much in licensing fees for their automobiles as people in southern Ontario. This just kind of helps another little bit to cope with the 2,234 kilometres that are actually provincial highways in Algoma-Manitoulin, those ones that we need to keep in good condition and have proudly done so as government.

For a family, though, it's \$200. I should get these numbers right: Up until \$45,000 of family income, you will receive \$200 in a rebate from the province to assist with your energy costs, whether they be fuel oil, propane, natural gas, electricity, gasoline for your car; you will receive that. It's something that I and the northern caucus thought was really important that we do for those folks in northern Ontario to assist them at least a bit in dealing with circumstances that are beyond their control.

I look right now at my colleagues, and I'm sure everyone in the House is concerned about the events in the Gulf of Mexico these days, off Louisiana. What that potentially has the ability to do is change the cost of petroleum products in this province. It has, or could have, a huge impact on supply, which could have a huge impact on the price of heating oil, natural gas—

Interjection: And shrimp.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: Not natural gas. He threw me off, Madam Speaker. He talked about shrimp, and I don't think that actually falls into this category. But it will have, or could conceivably have, an effect on petroleum, so we are concerned that that may happen.

We are concerned that—you know, electricity isn't really energy. Electricity comes from renewable resources. It comes from falling water, from wind. It comes from uranium that we convert into power. It comes from coal, natural gas, oil—it comes from all those things. It's just a way to move energy from one place to another. Electricity is not, in and of itself, the energy. It is a way of transporting the energy from one place to another. So all of those products, whether it be coal or uranium, whether it be the wind that blows or the water that falls, have an effect on how we deal—

Mr. Jeff Leal: The sun.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: Solar power, my colleague from Peterborough points out, is important.

In my constituency, we are very eager, and have just had 16 projects announced under the FIT program, the feed-in tariff program, for renewables across Algoma-Manitoulin. We're very proud of those. Some of them are water, hydroelectric; some of them are solar; some of them are biomass. Some of those—I am missing one.

Interjection: Wind.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: Wind. Algoma-Manitoulin actually has, and has had for many years, the largest wind farm in all of Ontario. Now, I think it's not the largest any longer. I think it has been usurped by at least one or two others. It is in Prince township. It provides roughly 200 megawatts of power to the grid. It's 120 windmills that proudly stand near the airport area of Sault Ste. Marie but in Algoma-Manitoulin and in two adjacent unorganized townships. We're very proud of that.

We're very proud of the renewables that Algoma-Manitoulin are providing to the people of Ontario. We're very proud that we are leaders in providing renewable energy sources to the province, whether it be from our dams on the Mississagi River or the dams on the Magpie or Michipicoten rivers. We have provided huge amounts of electricity to the people of Ontario. And we are also consumers.

Every year, some of my colleagues and I go snowmobiling. We like to promote—or I like to promote—snowmobiling and winter sports in northern Ontario. I take a number of members with me. This year, as usual, we had a number of members from the Legislature accompany me to Wawa. In Wawa, late in January, the problem was, there wasn't a great deal of snow cover. We had a fine time, but you didn't want to go much past Dubreuilville because there wasn't a whole lot of snow.

What does that mean, and what does that have to do with renewables? It means there isn't a lot of moisture coming out of the snow, and therefore not a lot of runoff. The spring freshet probably isn't, and that will cause our hydroelectric facilities to operate at less than capacity. We will have some interesting issues, I think, as we go forward into this summer.

Pressure on electricity moves people to use other sources of energy. That sometimes means increased costs for other sources of energy. All of that needs to be reflected in a bill for something, whether it be for electricity, whether it be for gasoline, whether it be for natural gas or any of those other things. I'm here to tell you that it is extraordinarily important, at least to my constituents, that they will receive money to offset the problem of living in northern Ontario in terms of longer winters, shorter days, those sorts of things.

1800

I didn't mention some of the other things that impact here. The one that I think is interesting is the three-year northern industrial electricity rate program, which will average about \$150 million annually to provide electricity price rebates of two cents a kilowatt hour to qualifying large industrials. That would be mills—pulp and paper mills—mines, the major employers in many of our communities. They need to commit to an energy-efficiency and sustainability plan—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

TOBACCO CONTROL

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Haldimand-

Norfolk has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Revenue concerning students using illicit tobacco. The member for Haldimand-Norfolk has five minutes in which to state his case, and the parliamentary assistant or the minister has up to five minutes to reply.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Last week I asked the Premier about illegal tobacco. Mr. McGuinty deflected the question to the Minister of Revenue. I'm curious to see who will answer today. Hopefully, we will see a more fulsome answer than was received last Thursday. Since I addressed the question to the Premier, perhaps the minister was not paying attention and did not properly hear or was not prepared to respond to what I had asked.

Just to reiterate, Ontario's Centre for Addiction and Mental Health has been surveying student drug use, the use of addictive substances, since 1968 and they report 60,000 students in Ontario now smoke contraband tobacco. As well, half the smokers in Ontario also smoke illegal tobacco.

Those 60,000 young people are now part of a criminal network that supplies cigarettes at something in the order of \$15 a carton as opposed to the regular price of somewhere between \$60 and \$80 a carton. This is unprecedented. Nowhere else in the world does this occur.

Surely members present would know and agree that smoke shacks and the business they are in are illegal, whether it's on public land or private land. I ask members, if you do agree, then I want to know here today why in my area alone there are at least three smoke shacks, out of several hundred smoke shacks, that sit on Ontario government land. This is adjacent to Caledonia.

As you drive south on provincial Highway 6, on the bypass, there is a large handmade sign that says, "Slow down." The first shack you come to sits right under a gigantic power tower on a Hydro One right of way. You come around to the bottom of Caledonia's main street, Argyle Street, and there's another smoke shack that sits on Ministry of Transportation property. Then farther down the road, on the west side, there is another smoke shack, again on the MTO right of way adjacent to Highway 6. It's known as the Hawk Shop. This particular smoke shack was the scene of an AK-47 shooting a couple of years ago, which I reported here in the Legislature, two fires and numerous confrontations.

That shooting was from a car sitting on provincial Highway 6. The smoke shack, sitting on MTO land, was shot up by a fellow wielding an AK-47. One fellow was badly injured in his arm. I just happened to be at a meeting at West Haldimand hospital when he was brought in. The shop itself was sprayed with bullets. There were a number of other people in the shop who were not injured. Just before the shooting at the smoke shack, the fellow with the AK-47 was down at Douglas Creek Estates right adjacent to Sacred Heart elementary school.

This government's Smoke-Free Ontario Act and the tobacco tax hikes have created, as I mentioned, several hundred smoke shacks in my area alone, primarily New Credit and Six Nations. Six Nations police and the local

newspaper cover this issue quite regularly and report on those who benefit—the Hell's Angels for one, and other organized criminal groups.

I've raised this in the Legislature before. I quote from the Six Nations Tekawennake newspaper, "There is specific evidence of the presence of major motorcycle gang operations, the Italian mafia, Russian mafia, Sri Lankan and Asian mafias, as well as Jamaican drug gang operatives working in the relative safety of native communities." Not good for the area.

It's very difficult to believe that this government is taking any action at all on contraband when we see the numbers continuing to go up, certainly in the Niagara area and my area through to Brantford. The plan is not working, and obviously we need some new direction from this government. Losing control has had devastating effects not only on crime but on social and economic life, and my question is why? Why has this continued to be allowed to go on?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Parliamentary assistant, you have up to five minutes to respond.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to speak on behalf of the Minister of Revenue, and I thank the member for raising this issue. It is a very important issue.

As you're aware, our government takes the issue of contraband tobacco very seriously. It is something which needs to be dealt with. It's an illegal activity which the government is constantly working towards curtailing. It's a very complicated issue. As you are aware, we're working very closely with the federal government, the First Nation leadership and numerous policing agencies at the federal, provincial and local levels to ensure that effective enforcement is taking place in order to undermine, to curtail the contraband tobacco business.

Most recently, the Ministry of Revenue, the RCMP and the OPP announced the resumption of Cornwall Regional Task Force, which is an excellent example of government and police forces working together to further strengthen tobacco enforcement. That's very key, given the multi-jurisdictional, multi-agency aspect to this problem.

We've also enacted enhanced enforcement measures under the Tobacco Tax Act over the past five years. Just to mention changes that were brought in through the 2009 Ontario budget and the Tobacco Tax Act, some of the changes to enhance enforcement are as follows:

- enforcement provisions aimed at individuals where there are reasonable and probable grounds to believe that the individuals have contravened the act;

- authority for the court to suspend the driver's licence of persons convicted of offences under the act involving the use of motor vehicles;

- provisions that prohibit the possession of any quantity of unmarked cigarettes, unless otherwise permitted in the Tobacco Tax Act;

- authority for the minister to apply for a court order to permit the retention of things seized that may afford evidence of a contravention of the act; and

- provisions that align certain penalties imposed upon persons convicted of offences under the act.

These are just the changes that were brought in in the 2009 budget.

As a result, convictions under the Tobacco Tax Act have more than tripled for the fiscal year 2007-08 to fiscal 2008-09 because of these steps. Combined seizures of illegal cigarettes by investigations have almost doubled, increasing by 47% in fiscal year 2008-09 compared with fiscal year 2007-08. Over the two years ending on February 20, 2010, about 74 million illegal cigarettes, 294,000 untaxed cigars and 32 million grams of fine-cut tobacco have been seized by ministry investigators and inspectors. Since March 2006, penalties assessed against those violating the Tobacco Tax Act total over \$14.2 million.

1810

As you can see, there's a lot of emphasis on enforcement. The results are starting to appear. We are making sure that, through the work of various governments and law enforcement agencies, we are curtailing the trade in contraband tobacco.

The last point I want to raise is that there is expert opinion out there that just cutting the tobacco tax is not the answer, not the solution, to undermining contraband tobacco, and the focus has to be on enforcement. Michael Perley, for example, who is the director of the Ontario Campaign for Action on Tobacco—which includes the Canadian Cancer Society, the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario, the Non-Smokers Rights Association, the Ontario Lung Association and the Ontario Medical Association—has stated quite clearly that cuts to tobacco taxes are not the answer. We need to continue to focus on enforcement, we need to continue to work with our aboriginal leadership, and we need to work with our federal government, the RCMP and the OPP to make sure that we are undermining this illegal trade in contraband tobacco.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Newmarket–Aurora has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Children and Youth Services concerning speech-language therapy. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes. You may begin.

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, I thank you for granting my request for this special debate on the state of speech-language pathology services in York region's public and Catholic schools.

Since raising this issue in the Legislature last week, it has come to my attention that this is an issue right across the entire province, and therefore I believe that we can confidently conclude that the source of the problem is right here at Queen's Park. This makes it all the more critical that the government and the minister responsible

are aware of this growing crisis and the consequences to thousands of children and their families.

It was in response to calls and emails from distraught parents that I asked the Central Community Care Access Centre to confirm the number of students on the wait-list for speech-language pathology services in York region and to provide me with an explanation as to why students are not being released from that wait-list. I also asked for the CCAC's plans for bringing those students into service.

In a letter dated April 16, the CCAC confirmed that 12 months ago there were 449 students on the wait-list for speech-language pathology services, and that today there are 1,023 children on that wait-list. The reason for the growing wait-list was not given, but the letter made it clear that it all comes down to the CCAC's funding agreement with the government.

I gave that information last week to the Premier here. At that time, I asked him this question, and I quote from Hansard: "Can the Premier tell us why more than 1,000 children in York region are being denied essential speech-language therapy and why their parents are being told they have to pay for private therapy if they want timely treatment" for their children? That was my question.

The Premier referred the question to the Minister of Children and Youth Services, who proceeded to talk about preschool speech and language services rather than answer my question. It was apparent to everyone who listened to the minister that she was either uninformed or was intentionally deflecting the question.

It should have been clear to her by the very fact that I was referring to the wait-list administered by the CCAC that this had nothing to do with preschool children. The CCAC wait-list deals only with students ranging from ages five to 18, and it's that list that has almost tripled in the last 12 months.

I'm certain that even the minister has to admit, after reading her response in Hansard, that she missed the mark. So I want to give her this opportunity to speak to the issue that I raised with the Premier last week.

Again, there are more than 1,000 students in York region schools alone who are struggling with speech and language disorders. Without timely intervention and support, these students are at risk of increased severity of their difficulties, not to mention the impact on their academic achievement and social integration.

In addition to the appeals for help from parents, I have heard from teachers who see first-hand the impact on these students. I've heard from many speech-language pathologists who share the concern of parents and teachers that this wait-list continues to grow while their client list continues to dwindle. Here's what one speech language pathologist had to say: "I will have eight clients in my caseload this May compared to 25 clients that I had the same time last year. Many of my colleagues are in a similar predicament and are wondering why the referrals have suddenly stopped."

On behalf of students struggling with speech and language disorders, their parents, their teachers and

speech language pathologists, I ask the minister to answer the following questions: (1) Why has the wait-list for speech and language pathology services in York region grown from 449 a year ago to 1,023 today? (2) Why has the CCAC stopped referring children from that wait-list into therapy? (3) Why are parents being told that if they want timely treatment for their children, they should pay for private therapy? Finally, what will the Minister of Children and Youth Services, the Minister of Health and the Minister of Education do to ensure that the more than 1,000 children on York region's wait-list will receive the speech and language pathology services they need?

I am disappointed that the minister herself is not here to respond. I will look forward to the parliamentary assistant at least addressing these questions.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Parliamentary assistant.

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: The member from Newmarket-Aurora has asked a question about the wait times in York region and speech-language pathology. I'm glad to have the opportunity to respond to this particular issue. I certainly agree with the member that early intervention is important when we are talking about our young children and the need to have speech therapy available to them.

The Ministry of Children and Youth Services funds the preschool speech and language program in York, and that has increased, since 2003, by 78%. We spend \$2.4 million to support this important service, and 2,814 children are receiving services.

There is a number of programs across the province that offer speech-language pathology, and I would say that the member has mentioned the fact that he is more concerned about the speech pathology programs for school-aged children and how they are receiving programs and service through the school health support services. That is funded by the Ministry of Health.

School boards, as the member will know, are responsible for establishing the priority waiting lists for students who require speech and language supports. The Education Act and the Ontario Human Rights Code require that school boards provide special education programs and services to students with special education needs. Decisions regarding how to use special education funding to best provide supports for individual students are made by individual school boards with consideration of the parental preferences.

Some school boards have staff assigned to provide speech and language programs and services, while others contract with the community care access centres, CCACs, as the member has mentioned, to provide those services. These services can include assessment, direct therapy and consultation support for the classroom teachers. The contracting of this service is done through the school health support services program. CCACs have had an increase in spending on the school health services support program of over \$20 million, or nearly 42%, since 2003.

Our government is currently reviewing the school health support services program, looking at the mandate and delivery model funding and coordination, to ensure that it is working to serve the children as effectively as possible. This is a multi-ministry review, including the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health, with the Ministry of Health as the lead. That review was begun in the fall of 2009 and we are anticipating a report by this summer.

It's also important to address the government's funding in York region. We have increased funding for many programs related to children and youth: a 56% increase in the Healthy Babies, Healthy Children program in York region—and that is a \$4.2-million program that has allowed 9,000 new mums to be screened and over 1,800 mothers to receive home visits. We introduced the blind-low vision program, which invested over \$20,000 in York's children. Our infant hearing program has had a 45% increase since 2003. Our infant development program has received \$1.2 million in funding to serve 20 families in York region.

There are 12 agencies in York region providing services to children with mental health challenges, and we've provided them with \$41 million in yearly funding

so that these agencies can serve over 7,000 children and youth. The York region and Simcoe county children's treatment centre also received important services and funding this year. Last month, we announced that they will be receiving a \$1.16-million increase in their base funding to reduce the wait times for children with special needs.

There's no question, as we move forward, that the issues around providing for children and youth are critical. We have increased the dollar values and the funding that has gone to those agencies. We know there's still more to be done, and we are very much working to make sure that those children are served in the best and most efficient way possible. But what we need to do is make sure that we are getting the best service for the dollars spent on behalf of—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you.

Mr. Frank Klees: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): No, there are no points of order on late shows.

There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried. This House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1822.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Aggelonitis, Hon. / L'hon. Sophia (LIB)	Hamilton Mountain	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Arthurs, Wayne (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	Attorney General / Procureur général Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Broten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Caplan, David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Carroll, M. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism and Culture / Ministre du Tourisme et de la Culture
Chiarelli, Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craiton, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Crozier, Bruce (LIB)	Essex	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (LIB)	Prince Edward–Hastings	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Energy and Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Énergie et de l'Infrastructure
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry / Ministre du Développement du Nord, des Mines et des Forêts
Hampton, Howard (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Hoy, Pat (LIB)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Johnson, Rick (LIB)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Kormos, Peter (NDP)	Welland	
Kular, Kuldeep (LIB)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Levac, Dave (LIB)	Brant	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
McMeekin, Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Mitchell, Hon. / L'hon. Carol (LIB)	Huron–Bruce	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Munro, Julia (PC)	York-Simcoe	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	
Murray, Glen R (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Oraziotti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB)	Kitchener-Conestoga	
Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (LIB)	Elgin-Middlesex-London	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (LIB)	Scarborough-Agincourt	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches-East York	
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Economic Development and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London-Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland-Quinte West	
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Nipissing	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton-Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto-Danforth	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga-Erindale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	
Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Perth-Wellington	Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener-Waterloo	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Garfield Dunlop
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Robert Bailey
Robert Bailey, Gilles Bisson
Jim Brownell, Kim Craiton
Bob Delaney, Garfield Dunlop
Amrit Mangat, Phil McNeely
John O'Toole
Clerks / Greffiers: William Short (pro tem.), Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Pat Hoy
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laura Albanese
Laura Albanese, Wayne Arthurs
Toby Barrett, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Pat Hoy, Norm Miller
Glen R Murray, Charles Sousa
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: David Orazietti
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Helena Jaczek
Bob Chiarelli, Steve Clark
Helena Jaczek, Kuldeep Kular
Dave Levac, Rosario Marchese
Bill Mauro, David Orazietti
Joyce Savoline
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Laura Albanese, Michael A. Brown
Donna H. Cansfield, M. Aileen Carroll
Howard Hampton, Ernie Hardeman
Lisa MacLeod, Leeanna Pendergast
Jim Wilson
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Leeanna Pendergast
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Ted Chudleigh
Mike Colle, Christine Elliott
Peter Kormos, Reza Moridi
Leeanna Pendergast, Lou Rinaldi
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Bas Balkissoon
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Yasir Naqvi
Bas Balkissoon, Bob Delaney
Joe Dickson, Sylvia Jones
Amrit Mangat, Norm Miller
Yasir Naqvi, Michael Prue
Mario Sergio
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Norman W. Sterling
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Peter Shurman
M. Aileen Carroll, France Gélinas
Jerry J. Ouellette, David Ramsay
Liz Sandals, Peter Shurman
Norman W. Sterling, Maria Van Bommel
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Paul Miller
David Caplan, Kim Craiton
Jeff Leal, Gerry Martiniuk
Paul Miller, Bill Murdoch
Michael Prue, Lou Rinaldi
Tony Ruprecht
Clerks / Greffiers: Trevor Day (pro tem.), Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vic Dhillon
Vic Dhillon, Cheri DiNovo
Rick Johnson, Sylvia Jones
Jean-Marc Lalonde, Ted McMeekin
Shafiq Qaadri, Khalil Ramal
Elizabeth Witmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions / Comité
spécial de la santé mentale et des dépendances**

Chair / Président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott
Bas Balkissoon, Christine Elliott
Kevin Daniel Flynn, France Gélinas
Helena Jaczek, Sylvia Jones
Jeff Leal, Liz Sandals
Maria Van Bommel
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

Continued from back cover

Taxation

Mr. Jim Brownell	1206
Hon. John Wilkinson.....	1207

Members' privileges

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters).....	1207
--------------------------------------	------

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Ms. Helena Jaczek.....	1207
The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters).....	1207

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

Douglas Craig Blake

Mr. Toby Barrett	1207
------------------------	------

Dutch liberation anniversary

Mr. Reza Moridi.....	1208
----------------------	------

Children's mental health

Mr. Peter Shurman	1208
-------------------------	------

Northumberland—Quinte West Day

Mr. Lou Rinaldi.....	1208
----------------------	------

Community Living Day

Mr. Ernie Hardeman.....	1208
-------------------------	------

Natural resources

Mr. Gilles Bisson	1209
-------------------------	------

School facilities

Mr. David Oraziotti	1209
---------------------------	------

Linda Johnson

Mr. Jim Brownell	1209
------------------------	------

Agri-food industry

Mr. Pat Hoy.....	1209
------------------	------

Visitor

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters).....	1210
--------------------------------------	------

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES / RAPPORTS DES COMITÉS

Standing Committee on Government Agencies

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters).....	1210
Report deemed adopted.....	1210

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS / DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI

Mr. Tim Hudak	1210
The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters).....	1210

Physical Fitness Day Act, 2010, Bill 49, Mr. O'Toole / Loi de 2010 sur la Journée de l'aptitude physique, projet de loi 49, M. O'Toole

First reading agreed to.....	1210
Mr. John O'Toole.....	1210

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Ontario pharmacists

Mr. Norm Miller.....	1210
----------------------	------

Ontario pharmacists

Mr. Pat Hoy.....	1211
------------------	------

Wind turbines

Mr. Ted Arnott	1211
----------------------	------

Ontario pharmacists

Mr. Lou Rinaldi.....	1211
----------------------	------

Ontario pharmacists

Mr. Ernie Hardeman.....	1211
-------------------------	------

Ontario pharmacists

Mr. Michael A. Brown	1212
----------------------------	------

Ontario pharmacists

Mr. Jim Wilson.....	1212
---------------------	------

Climate change

Mr. Phil McNeely.....	1212
-----------------------	------

Ontario pharmacists

Mr. John O'Toole.....	1212
-----------------------	------

Mental health services

Mr. Bill Mauro	1212
----------------------	------

Ontario pharmacists

Mr. Bill Murdoch	1212
------------------------	------

Ontario pharmacists

Mr. Yasir Naqvi	1213
-----------------------	------

Ontario pharmacists

Mrs. Julia Munro	1213
------------------------	------

Taxation

Mr. Jeff Leal.....	1213
--------------------	------

Ontario pharmacists

Mr. Steve Clark	1213
-----------------------	------

Changement de climat

M. Phil McNeely	1213
-----------------------	------

Presentation of petitions

Mr. Peter Shurman	1214
-------------------------	------

Mr. Peter Kormos.....	1214
-----------------------	------

Mr. Peter Shurman	1214
-------------------------	------

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters).....	1214
--------------------------------------	------

Mr. John O'Toole.....	1215
-----------------------	------

Mr. John Yakabuski	1215
--------------------------	------

Mr. Peter Kormos.....	1215
-----------------------	------

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters).....	1216
--------------------------------------	------

Mr. Bill Murdoch	1216
------------------------	------

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters).....	1216
--------------------------------------	------

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Lowering Energy Costs for Northern Ontarians Act, 2010, Bill 44, Mr. Duncan / Loi de 2010 sur la réduction des coûts d'énergie pour les Ontariens du Nord, projet de loi 44, M. Duncan

Mr. Gilles Bisson.....	1216
Mr. Bill Mauro.....	1217
Mr. John O'Toole	1218
Mr. Peter Kormos	1218
Hon. Michael Gravelle.....	1218
Mr. Gilles Bisson.....	1219
Mr. Bill Mauro.....	1219
Hon. Monique M. Smith.....	1221
Mr. Norm Miller	1222
Mr. Peter Kormos	1223
Mr. Jeff Leal	1223
Mr. John Yakabuski.....	1223
Hon. Monique M. Smith.....	1224
Mr. Peter Shurman.....	1224
Mr. Peter Kormos	1227
Hon. Michael Gravelle.....	1227
Mr. John O'Toole	1227
Mr. Wayne Arthurs.....	1228
Mr. Peter Shurman.....	1228
Mr. Peter Kormos	1228
Mr. Michael A. Brown.....	1231
Mr. Steve Clark.....	1231
Mr. Lou Rinaldi	1232
Mr. John O'Toole	1232
Mr. Peter Kormos	1232
Mr. Michael A. Brown.....	1232
Second reading debate deemed adjourned.....	1234

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE / DÉBAT SUR LA MOTION D'AJOURNEMENT

Tobacco control

Mr. Toby Barrett.....	1234
Mr. Yasir Naqvi.....	1235

Children's services

Mr. Frank Klees.....	1235
Mrs. Maria Van Bommel.....	1236

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Tuesday 4 May 2010 / Mardi 4 mai 2010

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Excellent Care for All Act, 2010, Bill 46, Ms. Matthews / Loi de 2010 sur l'excellence des soins pour tous, projet de loi 46, Mme Matthews	
Hon. Monique M. Smith	1185
Mr. Bas Balkissoon	1185
Mr. Steve Clark	1187
Mme France Gélinas	1187
Mr. Khalil Ramal	1187
Mr. John O'Toole	1187
Mr. Bas Balkissoon	1188
Mrs. Christine Elliott	1188
Mme France Gélinas	1190
Mr. Bas Balkissoon	1190
Mr. Steve Clark	1190
Mr. Shafiq Qaadri	1191
Mrs. Christine Elliott	1191
Mme France Gélinas	1191
Second reading debate deemed adjourned	1194

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Hon. Laurel C. Broten	1194
Mr. Ted McMeekin	1194
Mr. Paul Miller	1194
Hon. Deborah Matthews	1194
Hon. Harinder S. Takhar	1195
Mr. Tony Ruprecht	1195
Mr. Rick Johnson	1195
Legislative pages	
The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters)	1195
Members' privileges	
The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters)	1195
Mr. Norm Miller	1197
Mr. Peter Kormos	1197
Hon. Monique M. Smith	1197
Motion agreed to	1197

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Senior citizens	
Mr. Tim Hudak	1197
Hon. Dalton McGuinty	1197

Hydro rates

Mr. Tim Hudak	1198
Hon. Dalton McGuinty	1198

Taxation

Ms. Andrea Horwath	1199
Hon. Dalton McGuinty	1199

Taxation

Ms. Andrea Horwath	1200
Hon. Dalton McGuinty	1200

Taxation

Mr. Garfield Dunlop	1200
Hon. John Wilkinson	1201

Correctional services

Mr. Peter Kormos	1201
Hon. Rick Bartolucci	1201

Public transit

Mr. Ted McMeekin	1201
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	1201

Pharmacists

Mr. John O'Toole	1202
Hon. Deborah Matthews	1202

Services for the developmentally disabled

Mr. Michael Prue	1202
Hon. Madeleine Meilleur	1203

Asthma treatment

Mr. Dave Levac	1203
Hon. Deborah Matthews	1203

Services for the developmentally disabled

Ms. Sylvia Jones	1204
Hon. Madeleine Meilleur	1204

Public transit

Ms. Andrea Horwath	1204
Hon. Dalton McGuinty	1204

Agri-food industry

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel	1204
Hon. Carol Mitchell	1205

Conservation

Mr. Tim Hudak	1205
Hon. Brad Duguid	1205

Conservation

Mr. Paul Miller	1206
Hon. John Gerretsen	1206

Continued on inside back cover

